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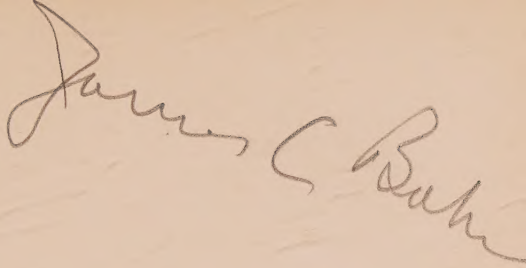

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American Religious Leaders

CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY

BY

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PREFACE.

I COUNT myself fortunate in the subject of this Memoir. The life of President Finney fell in times well adapted for the development of the remarkable natural abilities with which he was endowed. He was made for an active career, and abundant opportunities for action were opened before him by Providence at every step. He came suddenly to the notice of the Christian public, but his ardor never showed signs of abatement. His success, though constant, seemed always to be a surprise to himself. While he had his full share of conflict, and attained the full tale of years allotted by the Psalmist, his spirit mellowed with age, and his end was peace. If the story of his life and work fails either to interest or to instruct the reader, the fault is certainly in the writer, and not in the subject he has undertaken to present.

G. FREDERICK WRIGHT.

OBERLIN, OHIO, *March* 21, 1891.

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CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY.

CHAPTER I.

CONVERSION AND THEOLOGICAL PREPARATION.

In the public records of Warren, Litchfield County, Connecticut, "Josiah Finney" appears as the name of one of the earliest settlers, and we are told that the organization of the Congregational Church of the town in 1756 was effected at his residence, and that he purchased and gave to the ecclesiastical society the ground upon which the first "meeting-house" was built. Josiah Finney's wife was Sarah Curtiss, a sister of Major Eleazer Curtiss of Revolutionary fame. Their first child, Sylvester, who was born March 15, 1759, became a soldier in the Revolutionary army, and in 1779 married Rebecca Rice of Kent. The seventh child of this couple, born in Warren, August 29, 1792, was made to reflect the literary fashion of his time by receiving the baptismal name of "Charles Grandison," after one of the characters of Richardson's creation.

Josiah Finney, the grandfather of Charles, was

(as the genealogical tables pretty surely indicate) the grandson of John Finney, second, who was born in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1638, and whose father (John), together with his mother and brother Robert, was among the early settlers of Plymouth. John Finney, second, the probable grandfather of Josiah and great-great-grandfather of Charles G., married in 1664 Mary Rogers, a granddaughter of Thomas Rogers, who came over in the Mayflower. Through his mother, Rebecca Rice, Charles was connected with a large and prominent family of that name appearing in the early records of New London and Norwich, Connecticut. Through his grandmother, Sarah Curtiss, he was probably descended in 1641 from Francis Curtiss of Plymouth, or perhaps from William Curtiss of Roxbury, Massachusetts, a brother of the wife of John Eliot. The Curtiss family was originally from Nasing, England. Thus it appears that, like so many other prominent men of later times, the subject of our biography was descended from some of the best families of the earliest New England emigration.

When Charles was about two years old, his parents, following the prevalent tide of emigration, removed to the wilderness of Central New York, and found a temporary resting-place for the family at Brothertown, Oneida County, but soon sought a permanent home in Hanover, now Kirkland, then a part of Paris. Here they remained, amid the privations of pioneer life common to those days, until

Charles was sixteen years old. It was the days of the stage-coach and post-horse. The Erie Canal with its marvelous transformations had not even been projected. The country was covered with a dense forest in which clearings were made by slow and painful effort. There were but few churches and fewer ministers; so that Finney in his boyhood heard very little preaching, and that mostly by uneducated and ignorant men, whose mistakes in grammar so impressed themselves upon his mind that they were the subjects of merriment to him to his dying day. Books likewise were few. Yet, true to the New England instincts, this most advanced wave of emigration bore with it the schoolhouse, and young Finney was a regular attendant upon the summer and winter district schools, taught by persons who had received creditable education in New England. About 1808 the family moved to Henderson, Jefferson County, on the shore of Lake Ontario, not far from Sackett's Harbor. Here for a portion of the time Charles was engaged in teaching a district school, but there was no improvement in his religious opportunities.

Quite naturally he was led in due time to go back for further education to his native town in Connecticut, where we find him in 1812, attending the high school, or academy, of the place. When he expressed a desire to take a college course, his teacher, though a graduate of Yale College, opposed the plan, assuring him that at the rate of progress he was making he could by private study pass

over the whole curriculum in two years. While at Warren, Finney came under the influence of the stated ordinances of the church for the first time, and listened to the preaching of Rev. Peter Starr, who was pastor there from 1771 to 1822. But the regulation style of preaching in those days was not particularly attractive to the aspiring youth, and he seems to have been unfavorably impressed by it.

In pursuance of the advice of his teacher to content himself with going over the curriculum of the college course privately, Finney arranged to go South to teach and carry on his studies; but for two years taught school in New Jersey. Here there was no preaching, except in the German language, and, as that was unintelligible to him, he was again shut off from positive religious influences. After a four years' absence from home, he returned for a visit, intending still to complete his plan of further teaching and private study at the South. But in view of his mother's ill-health, he was led to remain within reach of her, and so began the study of law in the office of Benjamin Wright, in the town of Adams, a few miles away; there in due time he was admitted to the bar, and entered upon the work of his profession.

The Presbyterian pastor in Adams was Rev. George W. Gale, a young man who had recently graduated from Princeton, and who was thoroughly imbued with the form of Calvinistic theology there taught. During this period, Finney for the first time lived within reach of a regular prayer-meet-

ing, one being held in the church near his office. This he made it his practice to attend as often as business permitted. He was also the leader of the choir, and his influence over the young people was very marked, and, from all accounts, very prejudicial to the church; for he was a most unsparing critic of both the practice and the profession of its members. Mr. Gale had many private but apparently fruitless discussions with Finney respecting the truths of religion, but at last became so completely discouraged that, when some one proposed in church meeting to make Finney a subject of prayer, Mr. Gale remarked that it was of no use; that he did not believe that Finney would ever be converted, since he had already sinned against so much light that his heart was hopelessly hardened; adding, also, that the choir was so much under Finney's influence that it was doubtful if they could be converted while their leader remained in Adams.

Thus matters went on until the autumn of 1821, when Finney was twenty-nine years of age. Up to about this time he had not owned a copy of the Bible. But the frequent quotation of the Mosaic Institutes by his law authorities had led him recently to purchase one as a work of reference, and while thus using it he had become deeply interested in the volume. Under these combined influences he was becoming very restless, and was led to feel that he needed a great change in his inward state to prepare him for the happiness of

heaven. According to his own account, also, he was much perplexed at this time by the apparent failure of the church to obtain answers to their prayers. Still, after a short struggle, he became fully convinced that the Bible was indeed the true Word of God,[1] and its solemn commands pressed upon his conscience with ever-increasing weight.

Finney's conversion belongs to the same class as that of the apostle Paul, in which the inward change of character is necessarily connected with a complete transformation of the outward conduct. The salient points of it can easily be given. Fully to interpret it, however, requires a consideration of his whole subsequent career. The difficulty of such an interpretation is also somewhat increased by the fact that, in the Memoirs written by himself, Finney has accompanied his narrative by numerous doctrinal disquisitions, in which those familiar with the controversies of the time readily detect the result of subsequent years of reflection interjecting their later theology in the narrative of early experience. While, however, it is extremely improbable that the theological system defended in his later life burst upon his mind at the outset in such complete form as his own narrative would imply, it cannot be doubted that the deep struggles of mind through which he was initiated into the Christian life exerted a marked influence not only upon all his subsequent practical labors for the

[1] See *Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney.* Written by Himself. New York: A. S. Barnes & Co. 1876.

conversion of men, but ultimately upon the formulation of his theological system. It is therefore important to detail at considerable length the events connected with and closely following his conversion.

The convictions of religious duty which had been slowly ripening in Finney's mind for two or three years culminated in a crisis of unusual violence. Being brought face to face with the question whether he was willing to surrender all his worldly plans and submit his will without reservation to Christ, he became more and more agitated, and, to suppress his rising emotion, resorted to the favorite device of avoiding his pastor and other religious people as much as possible. As a natural result, at the end of two or three days he became extremely nervous, and was depressed with the presentiment that he was soon to die, — which, in his present state of mind, he felt, would surely involve the eternal loss of his soul. In the midst of these forebodings he made various resolutions to serve God, and to make himself fit in character for the kingdom of heaven. But for some reason all these were ineffectual, and brought no peace to his mind.

From his own account it would seem that the primary reason for this darkness and depression of feeling was that his resolutions were superficial, and that he had not really humbled himself in the presence of God, but was seeking a righteousness of his own, based upon works, and not upon divine

grace. The idea of trusting God for the forgiveness of his sins had not yet dawned upon his mind, or at any rate not with such clearness that he was brought to act upon the thought in the entire self-surrender of his soul. But at this point the gospel scheme of salvation, as a gift of God bestowed upon all believers through the atonement of Christ, came before him with great clearness. In Finney's own opinion, this vision of gospel truth was in a large degree the result of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon his mind. But probably he would not deny that in its essential elements the material of the truth had already filtered into his mind through natural agencies. The main facts of the gospel, though in unattractive form, had without doubt been brought within his survey by the faithful pastors in Warren and in Adams, and perhaps even by those unlettered itinerants to whom he had listened in earlier days; while his own resistance to the manifold claims of duty had wrought up to the highest degree within him that sense of the need of divine grace which is the starting-point of all true religious faith. Upon these elements of truth the illuminating Spirit now descended, as in a lightning stroke, and helped him to see the broad and reasonable basis upon which the Christian rests his hope of life and immortality. In the busy street, and in the light of day, there came to him a vision of Christ, transfixing him to the spot where he stood, and arresting his whole train of worldly thought. For a consid-

erable time he stood motionless where the vision met him, until at last he yielded to the summons, and resolved that he would accept Christ that day or "die in the attempt."

Still it would appear that he had not yet fully surrendered his pride and given up his self-righteousness; for the severest struggle of all was yet before him. Instead of making an immediate surrender to God, he had only resolved that he would surrender some time during the day. To carry out this purpose of the future, he turned his back upon his office, and sought the seclusion of a neighboring forest, which he had been accustomed to frequent for pleasure and recreation. Although people had often seen him wending his way toward this spot, so that there was really nothing in this to excite inquiry, he was now strangely impressed with the feeling that everybody was observing him, and that every one could divine the object of his movements. This thought so touched his pride that, to use his own words, he "skulked along under the fence," to keep out of sight, and when he reached the woods went to the farthest extremity of them, so as to avoid all possibility of being discovered. Here in a tangle of fallen trees, which was made to serve as a closet, he began the proposed operation of giving his heart to God.

Some will think it an instructive commentary upon his later views of regeneration, in which he holds that sinners are bound "to make to themselves new hearts," that now, at this crisis in his own ex-

perience, Finney was, for the time, unable to carry out the resolutions with which he entered the forest. When he opened his lips to pray, he found that he "had nothing to say to God." Even his heart, he says, refused to pray. Every rustling of the leaves attracted his attention, and startled him with the apprehension that somebody had found him out, and was coming to interrupt him.

If called upon, however, to explain the depressing experience, he would doubtless have said that the real difficulty at that time was that he had not completely humbled himself before God, and surrendered his will. When, a little later, this was really done, the darkness passed away. But an additional horror then came over him in view of the apparent fact that he had broken his promise to God, since he had promised to give Him his whole heart before he returned to his office. But he was still without feeling, and without the formation of any effective resolution. With overwhelming force, the apprehension was borne in upon his mind that he had perhaps committed the unpardonable sin.

All this was necessary to bring him down to the point of complete humility before God, and he came to see that the feelings which had prompted him to be so careful in avoiding the presence of his fellow-men arose from pride of heart, and that it was supremely wicked in him to be ashamed to confess before men his sense of sin and need, and he cried at the top of his voice that he would not

leave the place in which he had prostrated himself, though all the men on earth and all the devils in hell should surround him. At this juncture, the passage of Scripture was suggested to him, which runs: "Then shall ye go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. Then shall ye seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Finney confidently thought that he had never read this passage. This is doubtless a mistake. But at any rate, at that supreme moment of spiritual agony, he recognized in these words the voice of God; and one of those visions of divine mercy which ever characterized his later life, and gave such effectiveness to his preaching, burst upon his soul in its resplendent glory. He found himself no longer trusting alone in the efficacy of his own resolution, but in the supreme mercy of a Heavenly Father. Under the impulse of this experience, his memory was so quickened that a long list of promises from the Bible came thronging in upon his mind, and, to use his own words, he "seized hold of them, appropriated them, and fastened upon them with the grasp of a drowning man."

His lips were now unsealed, and he continued some time in audible prayer. How long he was thus engaged, he was unable to tell. Nor could he recall the exact moment at which he rose from his knees and started to return to his office; but could only remember that, before he was fairly aware of it, he was on his feet with a light heart, and was "brushing through the leaves and bushes toward

the open field." The real crisis in his experience is doubtless found in the sentence which involuntarily fell from his lips as he started on his return, "If I am ever converted, I will preach the gospel." The question whether or not he was converted did not at that time, however, arise for consideration.

On returning to the town, he found that the whole forenoon had passed away. But he had no appetite for dinner, and, instead of going to his boarding-house, went to his office, where in the quiet of the noontide hour he took down his bass viol, and began to play and sing some of the hymns with which in his impenitence he had so often led the worship of the congregation. Every note brought tears to his eyes. And, after making several ineffectual attempts to suppress his feelings, he put aside his music, and devoted himself during the afternoon to readjusting the books and furniture of the office, having little conversation with any of the various persons who came in.

In the evening he had the office to himself, and, after building a fire in the open fireplace, he retired to the back room to renew the devotions which in the earlier part of the day he had commenced at his familiar haunt in the forest. Here it seemed to him that he had a vision of the Lord, and that Christ met him face to face. So complete was the illusion, that it was some time before it was dispelled. It seemed to him, he says, that he saw Christ as he would see any other man, and that

beneath his benignant gaze he was melted to tears, and he wept aloud like a child. On being aroused from this rapt vision, he returned to his seat by the fireplace in the main room of the office, and as he sat down by the fire he received what he describes as "a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost." This was an experience for which he was not looking, and of which he did not remember ever to have heard before. It seemed to him as if there was a positive force like electricity entering and penetrating his whole system. He "wept aloud with joy and love," and, to use his own words, "literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings" of his heart. So overwhelming were these waves of feeling, that he cried out, "Lord, I cannot bear any more; I shall die if these continue."

This train of experiences was interrupted late in the evening by a visit from a member of the choir, who was alarmed at Finney's loud weeping, and supposed that he was suffering from pain, but was somewhat confused at Finney's reply that he was not in pain, but so happy that he could not live.

Notwithstanding this exalted experience and these transports of joy, Finney retired to his bed without definite assurance in his own mind that his sins had been forgiven, or that he had been fully accepted by God, and he passed a nearly sleepless night. But when he arose in the morning and the sun was pouring its clear rays into his room, these became to him an emblem of the brighter light that had arisen upon his soul, and there was a

repetition of the scene of the previous evening. He wept aloud for joy, and in this second baptism received a gentle reproof for having doubted the readiness of God to have mercy upon him. He now saw that the sweet relief from condemnation, which had come to his mind at the supreme moment of decision upon the previous forenoon, was closely connected with the divine act of justification, and that the peace which he had since enjoyed was that which God had provided for sinners through the gracious sufferings of Christ. He felt that his sins were blotted out from God's book of remembrance, and that, by a divine act, his guilt had been removed.

From this time on, a single purpose dominated Finney's mind. He felt that God wanted him to preach the gospel, and that he must begin immediately. He had been retained to attend a suit that morning as attorney, but when his client came to remind him of the case, Finney said that he had enlisted in the cause of Christ, that he had a retainer from the Lord Jesus to plead his cause, and that some one else must attend to the suit. But instead of seeking another lawyer, the man, who was a deacon of the church, immediately settled his suit, and betook himself to prayer and more direct labor for the salvation of men. Finney went out at once from his office to converse upon religion with his friends and associates wherever he might meet them. During the day, he spoke with many persons, nearly every one of whom received lasting

impressions, and entered at once upon an active Christian life. At evening, without appointment, the people gathered by general consent at the place where they usually met for prayer. The house was packed, but no one seemed ready to open the meeting. Without waiting to be called upon, Finney proceeded to tell them the story of his conversion. No sooner had he closed his narrative than Rev. Mr. Gale arose and confessed that he had sinned in limiting the power of God, and in discouraging the people from prayer. He, like many others that day, among them a prominent lawyer, had said, when the rumor of Finney's conversion became current, that it could not be true, that Finney was simply trying to see what he could make Christian people believe. But now all doubt was removed.

From this time on, daily meetings were held in the church for many weeks, and Finney devoted himself with such success to securing the conversion of the young people whose minds he had prejudiced against religion, that in a short time but one of their number was left unconverted. Soon after this he went to Henderson to visit his father and mother, neither of whom had heretofore made profession of religion. They were both converted, and a very powerful revival spread throughout the whole community, while, with Adams as a centre, similar awakenings occurred in nearly all the towns of the county.

During this period, Finney was in the habit

while in Adams, of going to the meeting-house early in the morning for a protracted season of prayer. After a little he persuaded a considerable number of church members, together with the pastor, to join in these early morning devotions. Whenever they became remiss in attendance he would go around to their houses and wake them up, and remind them of their privilege and their duty. Nevertheless, attendance became less and less, until, upon one morning, only Mr. Gale was found at his side. At this time another vision, similar in many respects to that which marked his experience on the evening of the day of his conversion, broke in upon his soul, and prostrated him on the ground. He was overwhelmed with the thought that, while all nature was vocal with the praises of God, man, the object of heaven's supremest love, was unmoved and dumb. In connection with this thought a light seemed to surround him which was, he says, "like the brightness of the sun in every direction. . . . I think," he goes on to say, "I knew something then, by actual experience, of the light which prostrated Paul on his way to Damascus. It was surely a light such as I could not have endured long." Upon this he broke out into loud weeping, much to the astonishment of Mr. Gale, who had seen no such light. But so deep were Finney's feelings, and so exalted his momentary conceptions of truth, that words did not seem adequate to their expression, and he made but brief reply to his pastor's

inquiries as to the cause of his tumultuous feeling. He simply continued to weep until the vision passed away, when a great calm settled over his mind. This is related by Finney as a type of frequent experiences through which he passed in the years immediately following his conversion, — experiences so vivid and deep that he always shrank from relating them to others.

During these early months of his Christian life, Finney was in an almost constant attitude of devotion, and observed many days of private fasting and prayer, when he would sequester himself entirely from his fellows, and seek a closer communion with God. These days of fasting and prayer were not all of them equally profitable. He soon learned that his motives could not be purified, and his faith exalted, by mere self-examination. But rather he was brought into darkness by this process, and his feelings were made to subside. Only as he turned his thoughts towards Christ and his work were his affections kindled and his pious resolutions strengthened. So deep was his longing after God that, if anything interrupted his sense of the divine presence, he found that it was impossible to rest, or to study, or to derive the least satisfaction from anything to which he was attending. At all times he was impelled by an overwhelming impulse of feeling to seek a reconciliation with God as an indispensable preparation for his daily work.

Such, in brief, is the account given by Finney

of his conversion. One not familiar with his subsequent labors, and with the final outcome of his life, can scarcely refrain from trembling at the apparent hazard of the course upon which he was entering. To an unsympathetic observer, the liability to self-deception seems so great that the whole experience would be set down at the outset as of problematical value; and certainly, in view of the frailties of human nature, a career with such a beginning is invested with little less than tragic interest until the end is finally reached.

Though somewhat deficient at this time in the preparatory education of the schools, Finney was the possessor of many valuable qualifications which served an important purpose in his future career. Nature had endowed him with a fine physical frame, exceptional grace of movement, and a commanding appearance. He had a voice of rare clearness, compass, and flexibility, and he was passionately fond of music. In Warren, after a lapse of seventy-five years, the memory of his music classes is still fresh in the minds of some who enjoyed his instruction. In his own old age he was accustomed to enliven the gatherings at his house with solos, sung with pleasing effect to the accompaniment of the piano. As a speaker he was entirely without mannerism; his intonations and emphasis were perfect, and the hearer never felt, till near the close, that he was listening to a powerful sermon, but rather that he was being personally addressed with much earnestness upon matters that were of great mutual concern.

During the years of his pioneer life, Finney had also successfully secured the several manly acquirements needed to round out the well-developed character. He was an expert horseman, riding with grace and driving with skill. He was an accurate marksman, and hunting was a favorite diversion when he was long past his middle life. While living upon the shores of Lake Ontario he had become familiar with the management of sailing vessels, an experience which gave great pertinency and force to the illustrations from maritime life often introduced into his sermons. His taste for literature was also strongly marked and of a high order. Shakespeare was a favorite author, and even in his later years few amateurs could more successfully take a part in reading the plays of the great dramatist. Besides the limited education obtained during his four years' absence from home in Connecticut and New Jersey, he now had obtained that discipline of mind and that broad knowledge of general principles which preparation for the legal profession imparts.

About as much mystery hangs over the first year and a half of Finney's life subsequent to his conversion as that which shrouds the corresponding period of the apostle Paul's renewed life. In his memoirs, Finney speaks of visiting his parents, and of their conversion, and of a revival in their neighborhood, also of revivals in the outlying districts near Adams, as all occurring soon after. But what his relation to these revivals was, and

what was his attitude meanwhile towards the Presbytery, cannot be ascertained. It was not till the 25th of June, 1823, that he was formally taken under care of the Presbytery with reference to entering the ministry.

On being advised by members of the Presbytery to attend Princeton Theological Seminary, he declined to do so, for the reason that he did not wish to be subjected to such influences as they had been under during their education. Such was the earnestness and sincerity of his spirit, however, that the Presbytery seemed to take no umbrage at his remark, but appointed his pastor, Rev. Mr. Gale, and Rev. Mr. Boardman to superintend his studies. From the first Finney's relation to both these advisers was frank as well as cordial, and of the most interesting character. But he was not inclined to accept some of the doctrines regarded as of great importance by Mr. Gale. Hence, according to his own representations, his studies consisted of little else than controversy, in which, as a natural result of his legal habits of reasoning, he was led to demand a kind and degreee of proof for the various doctrines defended by the young minister which the latter was scarcely prepared to furnish. Mr. Gale attempted to persuade Finney of the truth of a system of theology which involved the sinfulness of human nature at birth, and of a theory of the atonement in which Christ was represented as making a literal payment of the legal debt of the elect, and as securing their

forgiveness, after the manner of a commercial transaction, by setting down to their credit his own righteousness. Naturally Mr. Gale experienced much difficulty in defending this theory of the atonement from Finney's charges of unreasonableness and absurdity. Being unable to present satisfactory reasons to the inquiring mind of his pupil, Mr. Gale urged upon him the impropriety of maintaining views in opposition to those of the learned theologians who, after long thought and discussion, had elaborated this system as the most adequate expression of Christian truth. But Finney did not find it easy to surrender his judgment so completely to mere human authority.

As related by Finney in his memoirs, his contentions with Mr. Gale accorded closely with those current at the time of the disruption in 1837 between the Old School and New School parties in the Presbyterian Church. According to Finney, however, he himself, at this stage of his inquiries, was not familiar at all with the preliminary discussions upon the New School side which led up to this division, since he had access to no theological books whatever except those in Mr. Gale's library. But the so-called governmental theory of the atonement, which he publicly defended very soon after this, and used with such great power in controversy with the Universalists, was to all appearance independently suggested to his mind as he studied the Bible in the light of his experience and legal training. According to his own ac-

count, the main outline of his subsequent theological system was sketched in an effort to answer a Universalist minister who maintained that the doctrine of universal salvation was a corollary to the doctrines of Calvinism. The Universalists of that day magnified the atonement, and, having proved from the Bible that its provisions were ample for the whole human race, they contended that, as the debt of all mankind had been paid, the electing love of God must include all men and secure their salvation.

Under stress of this line of argument as urged by the Universalist minister in his parish, and on account of temporary illness, Mr. Gale for the time turned over the public defense of the orthodox doctrine of eternal punishment to Finney, who conducted it on the theory that the atonement was indeed general in its provisions, but was designed simply to satisfy "public justice[1] by honoring the law both in Christ's obedience and in his death; thus rendering it safe for God to pardon sin, to pardon the sins of any man, and of all men, who would repent and believe in Him."[2] But the reality of its actual application to all men was shown to depend upon the success of the means employed to secure their repentance and faith.

[1] This is a phrase of the younger Edwards, which Finney doubtless adopted from later reading and reflection, and unconsciously interjected in the account of his early experiences. It is pretty certain that he had not then read Edwards, and it is extremely improbable that he independently coined the phrase.

[2] *Memoirs*, p. 50.

With this presentation Finney silenced the Universalist, and carried with him the convictions of the whole community. The success of this effort surprised Mr. Gale, but did not immediately convince him of the soundness of the positions taken.

The vote for Finney's licensure was unanimous, but it was pretty evident that the Presbytery was actuated more from general considerations of policy, and from fear of being found fighting against God, than from hearty personal approval of the candidate. On this occasion, according to the prescribed custom, he presented to the Presbytery two written sermons, which probably, with a single exception, were the only ones he ever prepared. This exception occurred a few months later, when, at one of his missionary stations, he was somewhat embarrassed by a report which got into circulation to the effect that he did not have the necessary ability to compose a creditably written sermon. Stung by these suspicions, he attempted to demonstrate their injustice by preparing a sermon after the regulation style. But, as the motives inducing him to take this course were not of the most exalted nature, his carefully prepared effort was likely to prove an ignominious failure in the delivery. He was quick to discern the danger, however, and, taking time by the forelock, seized the notes that were impeding his eloquence and flung them under the pulpit out of sight, and then launched forth with his accustomed freedom in extemporaneous argument and exhortation. Finney was ever after an ardent advocate of extemporaneous speaking.

Upon the Sabbath after his licensure, Finney was invited by Mr. Gale to preach before his congregation in the regular service. But his style was so diverse from that which had become fixed in the custom of the times, that it was an occasion of much chagrin to his pastor and teacher, and he told Finney that he should be ashamed to have him known as one of his theological pupils. It is not strange that, at this, Finney "held down his head and felt discouraged." In after years, Mr. Gale had abundant occasion to retract this premature judgment. Eventually he himself became an ardent advocate of the New School Calvinistic party among the Presbyterians; and two or three years later, after having retired from ministerial labor on account of ill health, he was instrumental in opening the way for Finney to engage in the remarkable revivals which spread over Oneida County, of which an account will be given in a subsequent chapter. Mr. Gale afterwards devoted his strength to educational work, beginning his career in this direction by establishing and bringing to a high degree of temporary success the Oneida Institute, an educational enterprise which proved to be an important forerunner of Oberlin. Still later, he removed to Illinois, and perpetuated his name in the college town of Galesburg.

It is difficult to determine the extent of Mr. Gale's influence upon Finney's views. Nor have we been able to ascertain just what books Finney found in Mr. Gale's library. But, according to

Finney's own recollection in his declining years, there were few points of agreement, at that time, between him and his pastor and teacher, and the Bible was his own chief theological text-book. This, he says, he read by the hour upon his knees, praying the Lord to help him in his understanding of it. In his later preaching, and in his theological writings, there is clear evidence of the influence of the younger Edwards and of Dr. N. W. Taylor. It certainly was not till some time after this that he came into possession of the writings of the elder Edwards. There need be no question, therefore, that at this period of his development he went for light exclusively, as he says, to the "Bible, and to the philosophy or workings of his own mind, as revealed in consciousness," and especially in the marvelous experiences through which he was passing at the time.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY REVIVAL LABORS.

Soon after he had been licensed by the Presbytery, Finney was commissioned by the Female Missionary Society of the Western District of New York to preach for three months in the northern part of Jefferson County.[1] During this time he divided his labors between Evans Mills and Antwerp, villages about thirteen miles apart, spending the alternate Sabbaths at Antwerp. In both of these towns, churches were already established, and for the first few weeks Finney contented himself with preaching in the ordinary way upon the Sabbaths, with extra meetings on intervening days.

At Evans Mills the Congregationalists had no house of worship, but held union services with the Baptists in a large stone school-building. Unusual audiences gathered upon the Sabbaths in which Finney conducted the services, and much general interest was expressed in his preaching.

The religious condition of Evans Mills, as de-

[1] See letter of Finney to the president of the society, dated Antwerp, June 10, 1824, first published in the *Western Recorder*, and reprinted in the *Religious Intelligencer* for July, 1824 (New Haven, Conn.). According to Finney's *Memoirs*, his license was dated March, 1824, but according to his letter in Fowler's *Historical Sketch of Presbyterianism*, the date was December 30, 1823.

scribed by Finney in the letter just referred to, was such as is often found in frontier towns. The church "were disheartened," he says, "and had hung their harps upon the willows. The dear Zion of God was robed in mourning and sat desolate as a widow. . . . Rebellion against the blessed God, under almost every form, and in every shocking degree, stalked abroad with unblushing front, in defiance of Almighty authority, and in the heedless and impious rejection of proffered grace and mercy. The streets resounded with impious oaths; the mouths of the multitude were filled with cursing and bitterness, and it was but too obvious that destruction and misery were in their ways. In view of this state of things my soul was sick, and I commenced my labors amongst them with plain dealing, and denounced the terrors of the Almighty against them for their impious wickedness, and ruinous rejection of the gospel of God's dear Son."

The adherents of the Congregational Church were much encouraged by the signs of prosperity exhibited in the increased attendance upon the preaching of their new minister. But Finney could not be content with this, and hence with much emotion told them, at the close of one of his Sabbath services, that he was not satisfied with the results of his preaching; that he was convinced from appearances that they were not being really benefited; and that he could not spend any more time with them except they were going really to receive and act upon the gospel which he preached.

Then, after due explanation of what he meant, he informed them that whether he remained there to preach any longer depended upon whether they were going to "become Christians and enlist in the service of the Saviour." With that discernment of the state of the congregation for which he was ever after so remarkable, Finney called at once, and in very specific terms, for an expression of sentiment, asking those who would immediately "make their peace with God" to stand up, adding that he should understand that those who sat still expressed a determination to remain in their present attitude, and not to accept Christ.

As he expected, not a person rose. Looking around over the audience for a brief interval, he impressed upon them, in a few additional words, the solemnity of the position they were in, and the significance of refusing to act according to their convictions and of allowing themselves to be publicly committed against the Saviour. This naturally roused their anger, and the whole audience rose and started for the door. Finney stopped speaking, and the audience of course halted and looked around. He took the occasion to recall his previous statement, and to announce his willingness to preach to them once more on the following night.

All left the house with the exception of a Baptist deacon, who remained to let the preacher know that he believed the proper course had been taken to bring the people face to face with their short-

comings. These two then arranged to spend the following "day in fasting and prayer, separately in the morning and together in the afternoon." Meanwhile there was much indignation among the people at what they called the unfair advantage Finney had taken of them. And, if one looks upon the situation without knowing the man, he will indeed with good reason set the transaction down as extremely rash and foolish. But the result so well illustrates the real spirit and power of Finney that it sheds a flood of light upon his subsequent career.

The key to much of Finney's success lay in the fact that he possessed both great natural and great acquired abilities, of which he himself was never fully conscious. He was always characterized by such a frank and childlike spirit that criticism was disarmed in his presence. He believed also that nothing could be effected in promoting a revival of religion except through prayer, and by the special aid of the Spirit. His first aim, therefore, was always to secure united prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Rev. Mr. Cross, who, when a lad, was converted in the meetings held in what was called Sodom, of which we shall presently speak, and who for fifty years has been an influential pastor in that region, says he well remembers the circumstances connected with Finney's first visit when beginning a series of meetings in one of the neighboring towns. Young Cross was at the house of the deacon of the church upon Fin-

ney's arrival. As soon as he had taken off his overcoat, he asked what praying persons there were in the neighborhood. He was informed that there were very few. Two or three women in humble circumstances were mentioned, however, who were of recognized piety. His instant reply was, "I must see them," and he immediately put on his overcoat and set out to look them up. This will illustrate what was his universal practice in subsequent years.

On the occasion of the crisis now under consideration in the work at Evans Mills, Finney and the Baptist deacon retired together to a neighboring grove, and spent the whole afternoon in prayer, going directly from there to the place appointed for the evening meeting, which they found packed with a deeply convicted and excited audience. Finney preached for an hour and a half upon the blessedness of the righteous, and upon the fearfulness of the award in store for the wicked; but he called for no expression of feeling, and dismissed the congregation with the announcement that he would preach again on the next evening.

This sermon, as was intended, greatly increased the conviction of sin throughout the community. So deep was the feeling, that Finney was sought for several times during the night to counsel and pray with those who had been brought into distress of mind. But, as he was not staying at his usual lodging-place, he could not be found. The following day, however, he spent the whole time in visit-

ing from house to house, finding that the anger and indignation of the previous evening were almost everywhere changed to deep conviction of sin. In the course of a few weeks almost the entire community was converted, and the whole moral and religious character of the place was changed. The lowest tavern of the village, which had been the favorite resort of revelry and blasphemy, became, through the conversion of the bar-tender himself, a regular place of assembly for prayer and praise, and the surrounding neighborhoods caught the spirit and passed through a like moral revolution.

During these first three months of Finney's work under the auspices of the Female Missionary Society, the most of the time intervening between the Sabbaths was spent at Evans Mills. But at Antwerp hopeful conversions were also occurring from time to time, and in the letter already quoted Finney expresses hope that "God designs to visit this people with the outpouring of his Holy Spirit," modestly adding: "that as it is one object of your society to build up and strengthen feeble churches, — to unite their strength in the establishing of the gospel among them, — this object, I have strong hopes, will be effected at the two places where I have principally labored."

On the 1st of July, 1824, the St. Lawrence Presbytery convened at Evans Mills, and, among other business, considered the propriety of ordaining Finney. In the afternoon, while he was in attend-

ance upon the meeting, where a large audience had assembled, the Presbytery, without any premonition, called upon him to preach. Finney thinks this was from a desire of some of the ministers to see what he could do on a moment's notice. But more probably it was regarded by them as a part of their examination of him with reference to his fitness to receive full ordination. At any rate the invitation was thus unceremoniously given. Though Finney accepted the invitation, he refused to go into the high box-pulpit with which this church, like all others of that day, was provided. Instead, he stepped out into the broad-aisle, and preached a powerful extemporaneous sermon from the text, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The effect upon the audience is said to have been marked, but the ministers, in the line of their supposed duty, annoyed Finney somewhat by criticising the style and manner of his address, complaining that he was letting down the dignity of the pulpit; that he condescended to talk to the people in a colloquial manner, like a lawyer at the bar; that his exhortations were too vehement; that he spoke in too strong terms of the hazard of life, and too severely blamed the people for their sin. At the close of the sermon, one of the ministers patronizingly said to Finney that, while he would not like to have him preach in his church, he should be very glad, if it ever came in his way, to invite him to preach in some of the school-houses in the out-districts of his parish. Neverthe-

less, the Presbytery proceeded to the ordination services, which took place that evening in the Methodist meeting-house, — Rev. A. W. Platt presiding, and Rev. J. Clinton preaching the sermon. His commission by the Female Society seems to have been renewed for another three months, during which he devoted the greater part of his strength to the work at Antwerp.

Antwerp contained a small Presbyterian church, but the religious people were few, as at Evans Mills, and were completely overawed by the violent opposition of the irreligious element. One of the elders, upon whom they depended to maintain the services, and who lived five miles away, had for some time found it almost impossible to attend the regular meetings of the church on account of the opposition of his neighbors. The people of one of the intervening districts would even go to the extent of taking the wheels off his carriage as he was passing upon the Sabbath. Allusion has already been made to a neighborhood called "Sodom." This was in the outskirts of Antwerp, and was so named because of its resemblance in character to the Sodom of old; and the comparison was completed by the residence in it of a solitary pious man, who was duly nicknamed Lot. Very early in his work at Antwerp, Finney was invited to hold an afternoon service in this neighborhood. Without knowing the circumstances, and so, of course, without any premeditation, he chose the text, "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will

destroy this city," vividly describing the condition of Sodom, and the urgency with which Lot was commanded to escape. Naturally enough, the faces of the audience became gloomy, and the rough men looked at each other with expressions of intense anger. When he had finished the exposition of the narrative connected with the text, he appealed to them with great earnestness and feeling to put away their sins, taking it for granted, as he told them, that since, as he had been informed, they had never had a religious meeting in the place, he could properly infer that they were a very ungodly people. Instantly their anger was turned into deep conviction of sin, and so intense did their solicitude for themselves become, that nearly the whole congregation almost simultaneously fell upon their knees or prostrate upon the floor, each one who was able to speak engaging in audible prayer for himself. This of course brought the sermon to an end, as Finney could no longer get the attention of the audience. The man who was known as Lot was called upon to pray, but even his stentorian voice was unable to attract the attention of the agonized people.

As Finney had an evening appointment in the village, he could not linger with them long. But such time as he could, he employed in giving instruction to various individuals within his reach. One after another of these believed, became calm and quiet, and then began to pray for others. On leaving, Finney asked the so-called Lot to take

charge of the meeting. Such was the interest that the audience could not be dismissed. Many of the people remained all night, and in the morning those who had failed to find peace were carried away to a private house, to make room for the school. That this was not a mere outburst of temporary feeling is evident from the subsequent history of the neighborhood. This deep conviction of sin was but a just recognition of the real condition of the hearts of the people, and was, with nearly all of them, the beginning of a new life which permanently transformed their characters.

The revival in "Sodom" is an illustration of a work that spread throughout all the neighborhoods surrounding Antwerp, and resulted in the gathering of a strong church at the centre of the town. When the six months of Finney's commission had expired, he procured for them a pastor, who was settled, and the church has remained prosperous to the present time.

We cannot understand the success of Finney's labors in these towns without keeping in mind the intensity of his religious convictions and the great tenderness of his heart. His first sermon in the neighborhood where the elder resided who met with such opposition in going to church, was from the text, "Ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" The scene was similar to that in "Sodom." Conviction fell upon the whole assembly; but the words of rebuke were not those of one who loved denunciation:

they were rather like the faithful probing of the surgeon who knows full well the gravity of the case. When his words of rebuke had accomplished their design, he then with tears set forth the promises of Christ. Rev. Mr. Cross, who has already been mentioned as one of the converts at the first meeting in "Sodom," describes Finney's preaching at this time as essentially the same as that which he heard thirty years later at Syracuse. As befitted the circumstances, the solemnity of the speaker was intense, and entirely without affectation. As his piercing blue eyes swept over the congregation, the great themes of the gospel were held up and explained, and pressed upon the audience with overwhelming effect. Thirty years later he was the same man, animated by the same overpowering desire to lead men into a better life, but of course somewhat polished by his long contact with city audiences.

It has been necessary to dwell thus minutely upon these earliest labors of Finney, in order to understand his later career. It is interesting also to observe, in passing, the extent to which, according to his own account, his preaching was what would be called "doctrinal." The larger part of every sermon was spent in expounding some great truth of the Bible. At this time, as always, he felt called upon to present in his preaching the whole body of the so-called Calvinistic system of divinity; one of his most effective sermons in Antwerp being upon the doctrine of election, in

which he showed that it was a truth both of the Bible and of reason; that to deny it was "to deny the very attributes of God;" that it opposed no obstacles in the way of the non-elect; while it is the only ground of hope that anybody will be saved.

At the end of his commission for the second three months of labor in the two churches mentioned, Finney encouraged the people at Evans Mills that he would settle with them for the year. He took advantage of this prospect to obtain a few days' respite from his labor, and fulfill his engagement to be married to Miss Lydia Andrews, a young lady of the highest personal qualities, whose home was in Whitestown, Oneida County, and who had been deeply interested in praying for Finney's conversion in the days of his impenitence. The marriage took place in October, 1824, and after an interval of two or three days, leaving his wife to make some additional preparations for housekeeping, Finney went back to Evans Mills for the purpose of obtaining conveyance for their household goods. It was his intention to return for Mrs. Finney after spending one Sabbath at Evans Mills, but revival interest was developing in so many places in the neighborhood that he was prevailed upon to remain and preach from night to night until the week had worn away. Such were the demands of the work, indeed, that his plans for housekeeping had to be deferred, and with the full consent of his wife he decided to put off sending for her until "God seemed to open

the way." The whole winter passed in these engrossing labors, and early spring arrived before the way seemed clear for him to carry out the plans with which he had left his wife in October. At the first interval of rest, and before sleighing broke up, he set out with a horse and cutter upon his pleasant errand. But as the road was slippery and the horse smooth-shod, and Oneida County a hundred miles away, he was compelled to stop at the neighboring town of Le Rayville to have the horse's shoes reset and sharpened. It was about noon, and no sooner did the people of the place learn that Finney was at the blacksmith shop than they began to crowd around him, and urge him to preach in the schoolhouse at one o'clock. This he did in compliance with their importunate desire. The interest at the meeting was so great that he felt constrained to spend the night there, and made an appointment for the evening. In the evening he made another appointment for the morning, and then yet another for the following evening. So marked was the interest that he could not feel warranted in leaving the place without doing all that he could to foster it and bring it to its proper fruition. He consequently engaged another person to proceed on the journey for Mrs. Finney, while he went on preaching, from day to day and night to night, responding meanwhile as far as possible to invitations to preach in other places.

It would be doing the keenest injustice to Fin-

ney to attribute this long separation from his wife, so soon after their marriage, to any indifference of feeling. It is to be taken purely as an index of the strength of his devotion to the ministerial work to which he felt himself called. For, throughout his life, he was passionately devoted to his family, and was never separated from them except upon occasion of necessity, and then with much self-sacrifice and solicitude.

About this time, Finney passed through an experience which became characteristic of his later life whenever he was about to enter upon untried fields of labor. While preaching at Antwerp there had been much opposition to him in the neighboring town of Gouverneur; and now, from some source, of which he could give no account except that it was by direct revelation of God, during a season of prayer, he became impressed with an irresistible conviction that there was to be a great revival in this present centre of opposition to his work, and that he must go there to preach. Not long after this he met one of the members of the church, and made known to him his convictions, with the result of being regarded by his auditor as one who was beside himself. Nevertheless, he charged the man both to assure the people of Gouverneur that he was coming to visit them, and to urge them to prepare "for the outpouring of the Lord's Spirit." Improbable as all of this seemed at the time, it was speedily accomplished; for he very soon went to the place, and witnessed there

a repetition of scenes similar to those already described.

At Gouverneur there came into greater prominence than before the celebrated "Father Nash," a Presbyterian clergyman somewhat advanced in life, who felt moved for some years afterwards to accompany Finney for the purpose of sustaining him with his prayers. It should have been mentioned that, in some of the places in which Finney had already preached, Father Nash had been present a part of the time, and was accustomed on such occasions to make out a list of persons and pray for them one by one in secret. Later on, Father Nash became a marked subject of attack from those who opposed the so-called "new measures" of Finney, and much fault was found with him because of the loudness of his voice in prayer. On account of this, so his detractors averred, it was impossible for him to pray in secret, even though he shut the door of his closet or retired into the depths of the forest, since "they could hear him pray half a mile off." The sincerity and Christian spirit of the man, however, could not be successfully challenged, and that the answers to his prayers were often remarkable could not well be denied. But his present and subsequent devotion was a late development. When Finney first met him, he had not advanced in his experience beyond that cold and formal state of mind in which he could pray before a great audience without shutting his eyes. A touching tribute was paid to his memory in the

"New York Evangelist" when he died, a few years later, in which was divulged the fact that a large number of most discriminating and pungent articles in that paper had been written by him. On the occasion now spoken of, Father Nash preceded Finney at Gouverneur to prepare the way for him.

A characteristic of Finney's preaching is well illustrated by some events at Gouverneur. His uniform plan of discourse was slowly and carefully to lay down and discuss the fundamental proposition upon which action was to be based, so that whatever movement of feeling there was should be well grounded in a perception of the truth. He always took pains to understand the position occupied by those he was endeavoring to persuade, and was careful not to proceed with his argument till he was sure he had found a common ground of agreement respecting facts and principles. Thus the intense feeling habitually following his preaching was the result of his exposition of truth, and not of any general attempt to produce excitement.

At Gouverneur the progress of the revival was checked, after a while, by an attempt of the Baptists in the place to proselyte converts, and induce them to unite with the Baptist church. This so diverted the attention that for six weeks, according to Finney, there was not a single conversion, as all were discussing the subject of baptism. Finney resolved to overcome the obstacle by a frank and open discussion of the subject himself. Consequently he invited the people to come together

upon Wednesday afternoon, and bring Bibles and pencils with them to mark the passages to which he should refer. At this meeting he went over all the passages bearing on the mode of baptism, explaining how they were understood by the Baptists and how by the Presbyterians. So fair was he to the Baptists, that they had no complaint to make. On the next afternoon, all came together in the same manner to study the teachings of the Bible as to the subjects of baptism. He began with the Abrahamic covenant, and went through with everything in the Old Testament bearing on the relation of families and children to that covenant. Then the passages in the New Testament were taken up. Under his presentation, it is said, the "congregation was much moved, . . . and the tears flowed very freely when he held up that covenant as still the covenant which God makes with parents and their households." In these tears some of the oldest and most confirmed of the Baptists were constrained to join. The question of baptism ceased to be the subject of conversation, and all parties united in promoting the revival, which at once began to spread again with increasing power, and continued until a great majority of the people in the town were converted.

The character of Father Nash's work is illustrated by a single anecdote current concerning him at Gouverneur. He was in the habit of rising at a very early hour and going to a grove, about fifty rods away from the road, to begin the day in

prayer alone. One morning his voice in the distance was heard on the clear, still air by a bitter opponent of the revival. He could not understand a word that was said in the prayer, but he somehow knew what it was, and surmised that it was being offered for him. The thought pierced his heart, and he found no relief till he had acknowledged Christ.

From Gouverneur the work extended to the neighboring town of De Kalb, where the ordinary course of events was interrupted by a bitter feud between the Presbyterians and the Methodists, growing out of unkind criticisms upon certain physical manifestations connected with a previous revival, in which many Methodists had fallen under "the power," as it was called, and had lain for a time in a state of helpless prostration; the Presbyterians were accused of having opposed the revival because of undue fear of this excitement. But Finney had not been preaching long before one of the principal members of the Presbyterian church fell helpless to the floor, in a manner precisely like that of the converts in the former Methodist meetings, and during the series of meetings there were several other similar cases. But, singularly enough, all those who now "fell under the power" were Presbyterians, and the Methodists, though equally interested in the revival, were none of them affected in that manner. On the last afternoon that Finney spent at De Kalb, he was intending to preach, but a prominent elder of

the church, who had that very afternoon passed through a most subduing religious experience, came forward to the pulpit as Finney was reading the hymn, and, after embracing him, begged the privilege of telling the people what joy had come to his soul on merely humbling himself before God. The whole congregation was melted to tears. Finney did not attempt to preach, but says that he "sat still and saw the salvation of God." Conversions continued to occur in every part of the congregation during the whole afternoon.

In commenting upon these revivals in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties, Finney lays great stress upon the efficiency given to the other means of grace by the spirit of prayer which prevailed in connection with all the meetings. It was not uncommon, he says, for the young converts to spend whole nights praying for the conversion of the souls about them. The deepest solemnity prevailed at all times, and there was the greatest solicitude lest injury should be done by inconsiderate words and actions. Private meetings for prayer took the place of social parties, and all were prompted to spend much time in secret devotions. Finney himself bears testimony to his own absolute dependence, at this as at all other times, upon maintaining the spirit of prayer in his own heart. If he parted with this even for an hour, he says, he lost for the time all his persuasive power over men.

Toward the close of this period, also, a special

burden came upon him, in his private devotions, with reference to the work of the future. He had a strange presentiment, he tells us, that untried fields were before him, and that unlooked-for difficulties would have to be overcome. So intense were some of these experiences that he was alarmed lest his physical system should break down; but faith lifted him at length above all fear, until he felt an assurance that he was "soon to see a far more powerful outpouring of the Spirit of God in all that new country." This, like similar experiences in later life, proved to be the precursor of a great and unexpected enlargement in the work immediately before him.

Up to this time, Finney's labors had attracted local attention only, and he had no plans looking forward to any wider sphere than was opening in the frontier towns of northern New York. So far, also, he had not been the subject of serious criticism. He had relied upon the regular methods of presenting the truth, and had uniformly worked with and through the church. The main peculiarity of his manner was the urgency with which he called upon men to respond to present obvious promptings of duty. As we have seen, it was his habit to portray with great vividness those truths which reveal the sinfulness of man, and to call upon men everywhere and always to repent under their present light, and expect the fulfillment of all the divine promises with reference to further light and help. The good results attending his ministry

could not be denied. So far, also, he had not marked out a way for himself, but had followed in a line of evident providential preparation and appointment.

Equally marked was the providence which now transferred his labors from the northern to the central counties of New York. In October, 1826, he went to Utica to attend the meeting of the synod. On setting out to return to St. Lawrence County, he was met on the way by Rev. Mr. Gale, whose health had broken down, and who was now residing on a farm in the town of Western, Oneida County. Mr. Gale greeted Finney with great cordiality, and persuaded him after much importunity to turn aside to his house for a personal conference. They were just in time also for the Thursday afternoon prayer-meeting. This the two attended together, and, as the people had no minister in charge, Finney was urged to remain and preach on the Sabbath. Finney relates that during the whole of Friday his mind was greatly exercised, and that he went frequently alone to the church to engage in prayer, "and had a mighty hold upon God." The church was crowded on the Sabbath, and the interest was so marked that appointments were made in schoolhouses in different parts of the town during the week. Almost immediately there were reported here scenes similar to those already described in the more northern counties of the State.

From Western, which was a country parish, the

work spread in the direction of Rome, the shire town of Oneida County, and soon there came from Rev. Moses Gillett, then pastor there, a proposition to exchange upon the Sabbath. To this Finney consented with reluctance, fearing that it might interrupt the work at Western. During the Sabbath, however, it became evident that the interest was such as to make it his duty to remain at Rome. An inquiry meeting was appointed for Monday evening by the pastor, without any announcement of Finney's expected presence. Mr. Gillett had stipulated privately, however, that Finney should be there to aid him, as he himself was unaccustomed to the conduct of such a service. The meeting was largely attended by the most intelligent and influential members of the congregation. The feeling was so intense that there was danger of an uncontrollable outburst, an occurrence which Finney was determined to avoid. After addressing them, therefore, for a few minutes, in a quiet manner, and praying, as he affirms, in a low and unimpassioned voice, that Christ would interpose His blood to save them from their sins, he dismissed the meeting at once, exhorting them to keep silent, and to restrain their expressions of feeling. At this moment, however, one of the prominent young men of the place was overcome by his feelings and fainted, and there seemed danger that the whole company would faint in the same way. Fearing this, Finney ordered the door to be opened wide, and requested the audience

to retire immediately. Thus all shrieking was avoided, but the sobbing and sighing of those who felt convicted of their sins were almost universal, and could be heard till they reached the street.

On the following morning, Mr. Gillett and Finney were overwhelmed with messages asking them to visit families where one or more members were under deep conviction of sin, and as they went from house to house the people would follow them, and rush in unbidden and fill the rooms, wherever they were. "We found," says Finney, "a most extraordinary state of things. Convictions were so deep and universal, that we would sometimes go into a house, and find some in a kneeling posture, and some prostrate on the floor." The dining-room of the principal hotel of the town was offered for a meeting of inquiry at one o'clock. Notice of this meeting was circulated after the hour of noon, and the room was crowded to overflowing, and could not be dismissed till nearly night. The conviction of sin was intense, and a great number were converted. Finney preached again in the evening, and an inquiry meeting was appointed, on the morning of the following day, in the court house, where there was a larger room. This also was crowded, and nearly the whole of the day was spent in presenting the promises and work of Christ to the convicted multitudes. He preached again upon the next evening, and so great was the number interested that the inquiry meeting of the following day was appointed to be in the church.

On the following evening, there was an appointment in a large schoolhouse in one of the outlying districts, but it became evident that the intensity of feeling was such that it would result in undesirable outbursts, and Finney dismissed the meeting without preaching, — exhorting each one to go privately to his room and consecrate himself to God in prayer. After this, for twenty nights in succession and twice upon each Sabbath, Finney continued to preach at Rome, and prayer and inquiry meetings were held each day.

The effect of this revival was pervasive and permanent. In some of the outlying settlements almost all the people were converted. For many months a sunrise prayer-meeting was maintained, and was largely attended. Open immorality was banished from the community. "The moral state of the people," according to Mr. Gillett, "was so greatly changed that it did not seem like the same place."

When the work at Rome had been in progress about a month, Finney was called to Utica to attend the funeral of a prominent elder of Rev. Mr. Aiken's church. Aiken urged him to remain and give him assistance, as there were signs of a revival in his congregation. An unusual spirit of devotion was beginning to manifest itself among the people, one of the principal women being so deeply burdened that she had remained for two days and nights in almost incessant prayer, until her strength was exhausted, and she could now

have no peace unless some one was praying with her for the conversion of her neighbors and friends. As soon as it was possible, therefore, Finney transferred his preaching to Utica, where, as at Rome, crowds gathered from night to night, and conversions multiplied on every side, many of them most remarkable in their character. So great was the interest that the principal hotel became a centre of religious influence, and many of the passengers in the stages who stopped there for dinner or to spend the night were converted before they could leave the town. Conversions were numerous, also, in many places for a considerable distance around upon the mere hearing of the progress of the work. After going to a manufacturing town near by to preach in a schoolhouse one evening, Finney was invited in the morning to look through the factory. As he entered the building, the operatives became so agitated that they burst into tears, and the owner of the establishment, himself an unconverted man, ordered the mill to be stopped and the largest room to be cleared, that the operatives might assemble in it for a religious service. In the course of a few days nearly all were converted.

From Rome and Utica as centres Finney went out and preached more or less in all the Presbyterian churches of the county. In the report to the Presbytéry the following summer, the number of converts was estimated at about three thousand.

During the following summer, Finney was invited to preach at Auburn, where the theological

seminary had lately been established. But during the winter there had begun to appear in various quarters a pronounced and bitter opposition both to him personally and to the revivals in which he was engaged. It will be in place in a subsequent chapter to speak more fully of the character of this opposition. Its immediate result upon Finney's own mind was to induce a brief period of despondency. At first, he says, it seemed to him that he was to lose the sympathy of the whole Christian world outside of the limited field where he was already personally known, and that probably all the pulpits of the land would be closed against him. A momentary darkness came over his mind. But without saying anything to his friends concerning his feelings, he gave himself at once to prayer. While praying, the Lord seemed to give him a vision of what was before him, and, as he says, drew so near to him that his flesh literally trembled on his bones, and he "shook from head to foot, under a full sense of the presence of God. . . . After a season of great humiliation before Him, there came a great lifting up," and God assured him that He would be with him and uphold him.[1] This led him into a state of perfect peace, in which he was able to keep himself from any feeling of bitterness or distrust, and he spent no waking hours over the matter afterwards.

The revival at Auburn, though hindered and somewhat modified by the outside opposition just

[1] *Memoirs*, pp. 193, 194.

referred to, extended to all the surrounding towns, and was in most respects as remarkable as that in any of the other places in which Finney had been. The antagonism to him in Auburn, however, was so violent that a large number of influential men who were attendants upon the church of Dr. Lansing, whom Finney was assisting, withdrew from the congregation. The most of these belonged to the unconverted class. But they were men of good reputation, and their opposition went so far that another Presbyterian church was founded, with them as chief supporters. But such was the genuineness of Finney's character, and so great the real respect felt for him, that these very persons, five or six years later, and while still unconverted, united in urging Finney to come and preach to them. This was soon after the remarkable revival of 1831 in Rochester, when Finney was on his way from that place to Schenectady, where President Nott, of Union College, had invited him to labor. But on reaching Auburn he was so ill and exhausted by the journey that he stopped over a day with friends to rest. No sooner, however, was it rumored that Finney was in town, than the deputation referred to came to him with an urgent request that, overlooking their former opposition to him, he would remain and preach to them for a while. In response to this request, he preached for six weeks, during which time almost every one of those who on the former occasion had opposed him so bitterly was converted.

During this first season of labor at Auburn, in the summer of 1826, Finney was invited by Dr. N. S. S. Beman to come to Troy to assist in revival efforts in that city. Dr. Beman was a man of marked ability, who, like Finney, had turned away from flattering prospects in the practice of law to preach the gospel. Though a native of Hampton, N. Y., he had lived at the South, and through marriage there had become the owner of slaves. Four years before this time he had come to the Presbyterian church in Troy, and was already making himself felt throughout the whole Presbyterian Church by his able discussions of the fundamental doctrines of their belief. In 1825 he had published four sermons upon the atonement, which exerted a marked influence in supporting and spreading the views of the New School Calvinists. His power as an advocate on the floor of the General Assembly had also much to do in strengthening and solidifying this party. The whole remaining portion of his life was spent with the church at Troy.

At the time of which we are speaking, Beman was in full sympathy with the revival spirit which had been so wonderfully manifested in central New York, and consequently urged Finney to come to Troy and assist him in a revival effort. This was in the early autumn of 1826, when the opposition to Finney was taking on more and more formidable proportions. Dr. Beman, however, instead of being daunted, was rather stimulated to greater

zeal by this attack, for he saw that the opposition was largely based upon misapprehension, and upon loose rumors which had no good foundation. The reports which had been sent throughout New England so grossly exaggerated the irregularities and infelicities attending the revivals at Western, Utica, Rome, and Auburn that Dr. Asahel Nettleton, now getting somewhat advanced in years, and whose career as a revivalist had been most remarkable, was greatly troubled by them, as was also Dr. Lyman Beecher, then in the height of his career in Boston. To stem the tide of what was supposed to be an ill-regulated and harmful excitement, Dr. Nettleton had been called at this time to assist in revival meetings at Albany. Whether Dr. Beman had a definite design in securing Finney's assistance at Troy at the same time is not certain. But whatever were the intentions of men, these two distinguished revivalists were now laboring in prominent adjoining fields. Finney had a profound reverence for Nettleton, and made haste to call upon him in Albany. At that time the two were not known to disagree in their doctrinal views, and Finney says that Nettleton did not then make any criticism of his mode of conducting revivals. But for some reason he was unwilling to have Finney attend the meeting at which he was to preach that evening. Hence Finney returned to Troy, and did not see Nettleton again until the assembling of the celebrated convention at New Lebanon the following summer, of which we shall speak presently.

The work at Troy was interrupted to some extent by a vexatious ecclesiastical trial to which Dr. Beman was subjected. Charges were preferred against him by certain disaffected members of his church, and the Presbytery was assembled to investigate both them and the revival methods which Dr. Beman had come fully to indorse and advocate. No charge of heresy or immorality was brought against him, but the specifications related mostly to infelicities of conduct connected with and growing out of the urgency used in trying to persuade men to consider their lost condition and accept the gospel. Dr. Beman's domestic life also was not the most happy, his wife being a notorious vixen; and among the charges against him was that, when his original call to Troy was pending, he did not unfold to his future parish the uncomfortable side of his wife's character. This perplexing trial, as we have said, was thrust right into the midst of the revival; and Dr. Beman was even charged with having introduced Finney and his revival methods for the sake of a diversion, and with the express purpose of silencing opposition to himself. The sessions of the Presbytery were long and tedious, but resulted in the complete acquittal of Beman.

Meanwhile Finney had been left to labor alone with the church in the midst of these disturbing forces. The misapprehensions of Nettleton and Beecher added also to the adverse influences. They thought they were doing God service in try-

ing to keep Finney's influence from extending any farther east than the Hudson, and in this they represented the pretty general sentiment of New England pastors. But none of these things hindered the work in the end, and the revival in Troy was very extensive and powerful.

From Troy Finney went by invitation to the country village of New Lebanon, about twenty miles to the east, bordering the Massachusetts line, and on the main road from Albany to Springfield and Boston. Here he preached for some months, away from the distracting controversies that had disturbed him at Troy. The revival attending his preaching was similar in most respects to those in central New York. Towards the close of his labors in this place, the opposition to his methods led to the assembling of the celebrated New Lebanon Convention, which we must now pause to consider in all its bearings.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW LEBANON CONVENTION.

In the narrative thus far, several references have been made to the opposition which Finney met in central New York, and to the general suspicion of his methods and work which prevailed beyond his immediate field of labor. All this culminated in a convention of representative ministers which assembled at New Lebanon, N. Y., in July, 1827. To understand the outcome of this convention, it is necessary to consider more in detail the actual characteristics of Finney and his work, as well as the nature and source of the criticisms to which he was subjected.

So long as Finney's labors were limited to Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties, New York, they met with no concerted criticism. The towns in which he labored were so manifestly transformed by his preaching that all local opposition was turned to admiration and praise. Even his personality, strong as it was, did not impress the public so much as did the wonderful spiritual results of the work. Indeed, the reports of those revivals which were sent to Eastern papers made no mention of Finney whatever. There were reports of the revival in Gouverneur in the "Puritan Re-

corder and Telegraph," of Boston, on July 29, 1825, and again in September, as also of the revival at De Kalb, but Finney's name does not occur in them. Again, in the report of the Presbytery, as found in the same paper for February 24, 1826, the revivals in Rome and Western are mentioned, but Finney's name is conspicuous for its absence. It is significant also that these revivals are spoken of as characterized "by no instance of the use of artifice to excite mere human feeling, or to inflame the passions. . . . The word has been generally presented," it says, "in plain and pointed language. Boisterous speaking and loud declamation have been studiously avoided." On February 3d, a correspondent in the same paper, referring to the revival at Rome, says that it "exceeds anything of the kind of which I have ever heard, except the day of Pentecost. . . . Every store has been converted into a house of prayer." On the 17th of March following, the same correspondent writes that all the professional men in Rome but one or two have been converted, and on the 31st he adds that nearly two hundred have united with the church. But it is not until the 21st of April that Finney is referred to, when, in describing the progress of the work, the correspondent says: "A Mr. Finney came to help the pastor. . . . After he came, the Spirit of God was shed down with such power that nothing seemed able to resist it. . . . The revival is remarkable for its solemnity and deep heart-searching."

The next reference we find to Finney is in a letter from a young lady from Connecticut, who was at Utica during the progress of the revival in that city, and who wrote on June 4th: "Such a revival of religion I have never before seen, and all has evidently been in answer to the fervent, persevering prayer of faith. . . . In every village around us God is pouring out his Spirit. A powerful work of grace has just commenced at Clinton, under the ministry of Mr. Finney."

To Finney's work in Utica, Thomas W. Seward, Esq., in an address upon the history of the city, refers in the following language: —

The spring of the year 1826 was signalized, in the history of the First Presbyterian Church at Utica, by the advent of Rev. Charles G. Finney, then in the dawn of his career as a revivalist. It was in Rome that his remarkable career commenced, and his intellectual force attracted many citizens who would not have listened to a less gifted expounder of the divine law. His exposition of that law was original and bold. Its novel character and its extraordinary fruits soon became the universal themes either of admiration or criticism. For months the revival eclipsed all other interests, and in no other season of religious inquiry was a whole community known to have been so entirely absorbed in the great pursuit. Mr. Finney's treatment of religious quietude was as merciless as his dealings with the wicked conscience, and in the religious world he inaugurated a brief reign of terror. His stern methods were oftentimes as necessary as they were wholesome; but it was a singular fact, that among those whose hearts most failed them

for fear were found many who had adorned years of religious profession by lives unspotted from the world.

The scenes in the crowded church [First Utica] on these occasions were solemn beyond description. No unworthy accessories to heighten the interest or deepen the impression were ever employed. Beyond some unaffected yet striking peculiarities of voice and manner in the speaker, there was nothing to attract curiosity, or offend even the most fastidious or carping sense of propriety. It is an inadequate tribute of praise to say of his preaching that, whether it was distinguished most for intellectual subtlety, strong denunciation of sin, or fearful portrayal of the wrath to come, it had its reward in uncounted accessions to the Christian ranks and renewed vigor of religious life. As a pulpit orator his place among the foremost of his time was long ago assured.[1]

Reference has already been made to the testimony of Rev. Mr. Cross, one of Finney's converts at Antwerp, who says that Finney's style of preaching in the revival there was dignified, his manners urbane, and his spirit childlike, and that rarely were any persons repelled by his remarks to them. If a work is to be judged by its fruits, it is sufficient to note that the transforming effect of these earlier revivals was for a long time clearly discernible in the places where they occurred. Six years after the revival at Gouverneur, Mr. Cross

[1] Quoted in *Historical Sketch of Presbyterianism within the Bounds of the Synod of Central New York.* Prepared and published, at the request of the Synod, by P. H. Fowler, D. D. Utica, N. Y.: Curtiss & Childs. 1877. Page 262.

resided for some time in the place, and found it so deeply penetrated by religious feeling that it was impossible to organize a dancing party, and it was unprofitable to have a circus.

Rev. P. H. Fowler, D. D., the historian of the Synod of central New York, who was by no means in full agreement with Finney in his doctrinal views, is still constrained to speak in the highest terms of Finney's ability, piety, spirit, and success during this period. Even Finney's exaggerated views of the errors of Calvinism, as Fowler regards them, are said to have aided him in demolishing many prevalent fallacies. "His imperfect education permitted rashness for the destruction inevitable in reforms." Force is, indeed, said to have been his factor; and "breaking down," his process. Nevertheless, Fowler thinks this was evidently the natural outgrowth of Finney's conceptions of wickedness and human obligation, and while characterizing Finney's views as those of the extreme New School party, he admits that they were for the most part "explanations of conceded facts, and not denials of them," adding that "on the whole, and for substance of doctrine, he preached the Calvinistic scheme." The same writer also makes note of the fact that the Oneida Presbytery, in 1826, saw nothing in Finney's doctrine of the prayer of faith essentially different from that found in Edwards's sermon on the "Most High, a prayer-hearing God," or in Calvin's works, or in Paul's prayer concerning "the thorn in the flesh."

The report of the Oneida Presbytery covering the year 1826 represents Finney's work in the most favorable light. According to Rev. Moses Gillett, pastor at Rome, the great instrument in the revival had been prayer, and the truths preached were "such as had been generally termed the doctrines of grace." The divine law had been highly exalted, and its penalties forcibly presented, while the ability and duty of all men to repent and exercise faith had been constantly affirmed. The plea often made, that we cannot change our own heart, was met by the scriptural command, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit." The duty of immediate compliance with the will of God was urged everywhere. Up to this time, Finney had not invited inquirers forward to the "anxious bench." Special meetings of inquiry were held, however, which, though largely attended, were characterized by no culpable irregularities. In these meetings the attendants were conversed with individually, and were given such instruction as their cases seemed to require; special care was taken not to protract the meetings to undue length. It is important to notice, also, that Mr. Gillett speaks of the converts as appearing "as well as, if not better than in former revivals," and, instead of having to refer to dissensions among the people, he says that "the church is blessed with peace and harmony."

Reporting upon the work in Utica, Rev. Mr. Aiken refers to Finney's plain, pungent, and faithful preaching as attended with wonderful success,

and makes special mention of the fact that the meetings were not characterized by noise and confusion, but, on the contrary, by great solemnity and stillness. He says, however, that there had been noise, and "no small stir about these things," but all this was made by the enemies of the revivals. He reckons the converts in Utica as upwards of five hundred, and says that after the lapse of eight months there had not been a single case of apostasy among them. Mr. Aiken makes honorable mention of Rev. Mr. Nash as Finney's assistant. For the sake of correcting misrepresentations, he adds that the means employed were essentially the same as those used by Whitefield, Edwards, and Brainerd in the revivals in which they were engaged. Among the doctrines prominently preached, he enumerates the authority of the Bible, the enmity of the human heart towards God and its need of regeneration, the love and sovereignty of God, and "justification by faith alone. These truths were preached constantly, and immediate repentance urged." He closes his report by saying that, though "some few individuals may have differed as to measures," the large church, as a body, was most happily and constantly united throughout the entire work. Rev. S. W. Brace, pastor of the Second Church in Utica, is equally emphatic in his expressions of satisfaction with the results of Finney's work in the city.

Rev. John Frost, of Whitesborough, reports about three hundred conversions, with only one

instance of backsliding. In answer to current misrepresentations, he says that "peculiar care had been taken to have all meetings closed at a seasonable hour," and that "the whole strain of preaching had been far from what is usually denominated 'declamatory' or 'oratorical.'" Within the bounds of the Presbytery, fifteen hundred persons had united that year with Congregational or Presbyterian churches, and Mr. Frost expresses himself as confident that ministers and churches had exhibited as much wisdom and discretion as had been exhibited in any revival of which he had had knowledge.

The committee add in a note that "the labors of Rev. Mr. Finney have been preëminently blessed in promoting this revival," and bear their testimony that "his Christian character since he made a profession of religion has been irreproachable." They further describe him as possessing "a discriminating and well-balanced mind," as having "a good share of courage and decision," as being naturally of a good temper, "frank and magnanimous in his deportment, ardent and persevering in the performance of the duties of his office," and as exhibiting "as much discretion and judgment as those who may think him deficient in those qualities would do, did they possess his zeal and activity;" adding that they believe him to be, "on the whole, as well calculated to be extensively useful in promoting revivals as any man of whom they have any knowledge."

Dr. Nevin, in his celebrated "Tract for the Times on the Anxious Bench," printed fifteen or sixteen years after these revivals, referring to the "great religious movement over which Finney presided" at this time, says that "years of faithful pastoral service on the part of a different class of ministers, working in a wholly different style, have hardly yet sufficed to restore to something like spiritual fruitfulness and beauty the field in northern New York over which the system passed, as a wasting fire, in the fullness of its strength."[1] But such is not the testimony of those best informed upon the subject. On the contrary, Dr. Fowler, to whose work we have already referred, says of the revivals that, so far from their leaving the region unfruitful and barren in after years, so as to be worthy of being called a burnt district, "central New York has since been the land of revival. The dews of heaven and its copious showers have seemed to fall continuously upon it," so that all the institutions of religion have flourished. According to the same authority, also, Dr. Aiken wrote, in 1871, "After forty years I am persuaded that it was the work of God;" and in 1856, Dr. Lansing bore testimony that the influence of the revivals had continued to that time for good in every respect.[2]

It is not surprising that so great a movement

[1] *The Life and Work of John Williamson Nevin, D. D., LL. D.* By Theodore Appel, D. D. Philadelphia: Reformed Church Publication House. 1889. Page 168.

[2] *Historical Sketch of Presbyterianism*, etc., pp. 76, 77. For further evidence, see chapter viii.

presented special difficulties to the contemporary historian; for it was necessarily connected with considerable incidental evil, and local observers were not so well prepared to gauge the relative amount of this as is the historian of a later date. In the case under review apprehensions were raised as to the ultimate influence of the innovations made by Finney in the mode of conducting revival meetings among the Presbyterian and Congregational churches. There was doubt, also, as to the full significance of his doctrinal innovations. Rev. William R. Weeks, pastor of the Congregational church at Paris Hill, was specially prominent in criticism. Mr. Weeks was an ardent defender of the theological scheme of Emmons, and at this stage of Finney's course naturally failed to see the points of resemblance between his fundamental ideas and those of the great New England leader. The points of difference, however, were apparent enough, and were magnified beyond all proper proportions. Mr. Weeks seems to have kept up a pretty busy correspondence with the religious leaders of New England, besides maintaining a good degree of activity in the publication of pamphlets and newspaper articles. The grave apprehensions of so prominent and able a man naturally made a considerable impression upon the outside world, with which Finney had the misfortune of being unacquainted, while in his antecedent history there was nothing of itself to command their favorable judgment.

As will have been perceived, many of the scenes in connection with Finney's labors were extraordinary, and easily invited misunderstanding; and though in general they were justified by the attendant circumstances, and especially by the remarkable gifts and graces of the preacher, these circumstances could not be fully understood except by those who were on the ground, and it was a very easy matter for unfriendly hands to caricature the man and his work, and thus create a false impression. In addition to this hazard, there was also the liability of confusing in one view the work of Finney and that of his weak imitators; and this was not altogether unfair, since it is true that, to a certain extent, a leader in social, religious, and doctrinal changes is responsible for the extravagances and misunderstandings of his followers. Time alone can fully test the wisdom of a reformer's action. His measures are not fully tested until they have gone to seed in his disciples.

At the same time, while the evangelical party was alarmed in view of the unmeasured forces which were being set at liberty in the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, there was a still more bitter opposition on the part of those belonging to unsympathetic communions, and on the part of many irreligious people who were opposed to all revivals. An instance of this has already been related in connection with Finney's labors at Auburn, when a most influential portion of the community withdrew in a body from the church where he was

preaching, and united in the support of a new Presbyterian church in which the preaching should be less pungent and the exhortations less urgent. Yet, as we have related, these protestants united in a body, a few years later, to urge Finney to stop and preach to them, and, almost to a man, were converted under his preaching.

Among other things, Finney was charged with advertising his meetings by sensational handbills, on one of which, it was claimed, there was a fearful picture of the judgment day. It is needless to say that this was entirely without foundation. About that time, and somewhere in that neighborhood, an ill-balanced Methodist minister had inserted such a picture in his own advertisement. That was all. It had no connection, direct or indirect, with Finney. It was generally reported, also, that it was the custom in Oneida County to whip children to make them Christians. This report obtained wide circulation through the ill-guarded remark of President Davis, of Hamilton College, who had in some letter referred to an isolated case of such punishment, adding, however, the ominous remark that he did not think there was any church "a majority of whose members would not oppose it."[1] On making inquiry, the Presbytery found that one misguided woman had been guilty of such an unseemly act, but that she had immediately repented of it and most grievously bemoaned it. There was no other basis for the report.

[1] *Minutes of the Oneida Presbytery*, vol. vi. p. 1.

About this time, also, a much-quoted pamphlet was issued by a prominent member of the Unitarian church of Trenton, New York, entitled "A 'Bunker Hill' Contest, A. D. 1826, between the Holy Alliance for the Establishment of Hierarchy and Ecclesiastical Dominion over the Human Mind, on the one side; and the Asserters of Free Inquiry, Bible Religion, Christian Freedom, and Civil Liberty, *on the other*. The Rev. Charles Finney, 'Home Missionary' and High Priest of the Expeditions of the Alliance in the Interior of New York. Head Quarters, County of Oneida."

In the letters that went thick and fast to the leaders of religious thought in New England, as well as in the pamphlets and newspaper articles published at the time, it was freely charged that Finney was given to holding meetings at unseasonable hours; that he was harsh and rude in his treatment of settled pastors who did not heartily support him; that he encouraged the habit of praying for people by name in public assemblies without their consent; that, as indispensable to the promotion of a revival, he encouraged the practice of women praying in promiscuous assemblies; and that he himself was irreverent in his prayers, and reckless in the use of whatever means would produce immediate results.

As illustrating the extent to which the personal sentiments and sympathies of the reporter affect his account of a discourse, it is interesting to compare the report of one of Finney's sermons as

given by Mr. Brockway, a disaffected member of Dr. Beman's church in Troy,[1] and a report of the same sermon as given by Professor Park, of Andover. Among Mr. Brockway's complaints against Beman was that he had "introduced into his pulpit the notorious Charles G. Finney, whose shocking blasphemies, novel and repulsive sentiments, and theatrical and frantic gesticulations struck horror into those who entertained any reverence either for religion or decency." He complained, likewise, that Finney, in preaching on the text, "One mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii. 5), "after describing the language of the redeemed in heaven as being 'Not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory,'" burst out with the following objectionable language: "We shall see the Restorationists come smoking and fuming out of hell to the gates of heaven, which being opened, they will say, 'Stand away, you old saints of God! We have paid our own debt! We have a better right here than you! And you too, Jesus Christ, stand one side! Get out of our way! No thanks to you, our being here: we came here on our merits.' . . . Why, sinner, I tell you, if you could climb to heaven, you would hurl God from his throne! Yes, hurl God

[1] *A Brief Account of the Origin and Progress of the Divisions in the First Presbyterian Church in the City of Troy.* Containing also Strictures upon the New Doctrines broached by the Rev. C. G. Finney and N. S. S. Beman, with a Summary of the Trial of the Latter before the Troy Presbytery. By a Member of the Church and Congregation. Troy, 1827. Pp. 19, 33.

from his throne! Oh, yes, if you could but get there, you would cut God's throat! Yes, you would cut God's throat!" By the time the report reached Dr. Nettleton, it was embellished with the statement that Finney said that the sinner would climb to heaven "on a streak of lightning" to hurl God from his throne.

The following is the account of substantially the same discourse as written out for me by Professor Park, who heard the sermon three or four years later at Andover: —

"The exercises at the Anniversary of Andover Theological Seminary in the year 1831 were seriously interrupted by the fact that Rev. Mr. Finney preached in the village church on the evenings of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, the evenings devoted to some of the main exercises of the theological students in the Seminary Chapel. There was a decided opposition to Mr. Finney among the professors and the students of the Seminary, but his fame was so great that we were compelled to give up our exercises on those evenings. We regarded it as certain that he would draw away our auditors. Forty-two orations had been committed to memory by the class, but, in consequence of Mr. Finney's sudden invasion, nearly half of them were necessarily given up. On the last evening of our anniversary exercises, the Rev. Justin Edwards, D. D., then a favorite preacher in New England, was to deliver a discourse before the alumni of the Seminary. Only thirty per-

sons assembled in our chapel to hear him. His expected auditors had gone down to hear Mr. Finney at the village church. That church was thronged. In the midst of the crowd were between two and three hundred men who were already, or were soon to be, preachers of the gospel. In addressing this large and unique multitude Mr. Finney was more highly excited than I had ever seen him before, or have ever seen him since. His discourse was one which could never be printed, and could not easily be forgotten. The eloquence of it cannot be appreciated by those who did not hear it. His text was 1 Timothy ii. 5, 'One mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' His sermon was just one hundred minutes long. It held the unremitting attention of his hearers, even of those who had opposed his interference with our Seminary exercises. It abounded with sterling argument and with startling transitions. It was too earnest to be called theatrical, but in the best sense of the word it was called *dramatic*. Some of his rhetorical utterances are indescribable. I will allude to one of them, but I know that my allusion to it will give no adequate idea of it.

"He was illustrating the folly of men who expect to be saved on the ground of justice; who think that they may, perhaps, be punished after death, but when they have endured all the penalty which they deserve they will be admitted to heaven. He was appealing to the uniform testi-

mony of the Bible that the men who are saved at all are saved by grace, they are pardoned, their heaven consists in glorifying the vicarious atonement by which their sins were washed away. He was describing the *jar* which the songs of the saints would receive if any intruder should claim that he had already endured the penalty of the divine law. The tones of the preacher then became sweet and musical as he repeated the words of the 'ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing.' No sooner had he uttered the word 'blessing' than he started back, turned his face from the mass of the audience before him, fixed his glaring eyes upon the gallery at his right hand, and gave all the signs of a man who was frightened by a sudden interruption of the divine worship. With a stentorian voice he cried out: '*What* is that I see? What means that *rabble-rout* of men coming up here? Hark! Hear them shout! Hear their words: "Thanks to *hell-fire!* We have served out our time. Thanks! *Thanks!* WE HAVE SERVED OUT OUR TIME. THANKS TO HELL-FIRE!"' Then the preacher turned his face from the side gallery, looked again upon the mass of the audience, and after a lengthened pause, during which a fearful stillness pervaded the house, he said in gentle tones: 'Is this the spirit of the

saints? Is this the music of the upper world? "And every created thing which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen." During this dramatic scene five or six men were sitting on a board which had been extemporaneously brought into the aisle and extended from one chair to another. I was sitting with them. The board actually shook beneath us. Every one of the men was trembling with excitement. The power of the whole sermon was compressed into that vehement utterance. It is more than fifty-eight years since I listened to that discourse. I remember it well. I can recall the impression of it as distinctly as I could a half-century ago; but if every word of it were on the printed page, it would not be the identical sermon of the living preacher."

Upon Lyman Beecher and Asahel Nettleton, as the most prominent leaders in the revival efforts which had been so successful in New England, was thrown the responsibility of endeavoring to check the evils threatening to attend the spread of what were supposed to be Finney's ideas and methods of revival work. Mr. Beecher was at this time at the height of his influence in Boston, where his labors had for some years been accompanied with an almost continuous revival. Mr. Nettleton was

everywhere held in the highest esteem, and was equally honored for the evangelical character of his doctrines, the conservatism of his methods, and the good results following his preaching. But, though he was still in the prime of life, his health had been so shattered two or three years before by typhus fever that he was at that time, and ever after, unable to bear the strain of continuous and severe work. In this sensitive condition of his nerves, he was unduly affected, as it would seem, by the reports which came to him concerning the irregularities attending Finney's labors, and felt called upon to do his utmost to restrict their spread and influence.

In pursuance of this end, as already related, it was arranged that he should come to Albany in the winter of 1826–27, and there devote what strength he could to the promotion of a revival according to his own approved methods. While here he prepared a letter, addressed to the Rev. Dr. Aiken, of Utica, recounting the evil reports which he had heard concerning the revivals connected with Finney's preaching in central New York. This letter was not published at that time, but, as he afterwards admitted, it was shown to about twenty leading ministers, and had their private approval. A copy of it was then forwarded to Dr. Aiken in Utica, and to how many others is not known. As was expected, Dr. Aiken's copy was shown to Finney at the time referred to in the preceding narrative. In this letter it is stated that —

"The spirit of denunciation which has grown out of the mode of conducting the revivals of the West is truly alarming! The church at H—— has been in a complete turmoil all summer long, occasioned by a student in divinity who had heard Mr. Finney." (In a note, however, Nettleton admits that he is not sure the student had heard Finney. But that was surmised.) "He went about trying to raise a party to 'break down the pastor,' as he called it. A desperate attempt to introduce the practice of females praying with males raised an angry dispute which lasted all summer. And they had a revival of anger in the church, but no more conversions. This account I had from the lips of the minister of the place, his wife, and session. The evil is running in all directions. A number of churches have experienced a revival of anger, wrath, malice, envy, and evil-speaking, without the knowledge of a single conversion, — merely in consequence of a desperate attempt to introduce these new measures. . . . The friends of brother Finney are certainly doing him and the cause of Christ great mischief. They seem more anxious to convert ministers and Christians to their peculiarities than to convert souls to Christ. . . . They dared not attempt to correct any of their irregularities for fear of doing mischief, and of being denounced as enemies of revivals. This I know to be the fact.

"Brother Finney himself has been scarcely three years in the ministry, and has had no time

to look at the consequences. He has gone, with all the zeal of a young convert, without a friend to check or guide him. And I have no doubt that he begins with astonishment to look at the evils which are running before him. . . . He has got ministers to agree with him only by 'crushing' or 'breaking them down.' . . . An elder writes: 'I have been fairly *skinned* by the demonstrations of these men, and have ceased to oppose them, to get rid of their noise.' The phrases 'blistered,' 'skinned,' and 'broken down,' and 'crushed,' were coined and are current only among the friends of the new measures. This language I took from their own lips. . . . They do cultivate and awaken in others what very much resembles the passion of anger, wrath, malice, envy, and evil-speaking. This is the inevitable consequence of their style of preaching. As Dr. Griffin observed, it sounds like the accredited language of profanity, or, as a pious woman of color in Troy expressed it, 'I do wonder what has got into all the ministers to swear so in the pulpit.'

"Now these means are very simple, and just such as everybody can use, male and female. Who cannot call his minister stupid and dead, and pray for him by name as such? and if he gets mad, and all the church too, no matter for that. The more opposition the better. This is certainly the way to have a revival, for it is Mr. Finney's method, and he has the sanction of such men as Mr. Lansing and Aiken and others. They did

not believe in such methods at first, but they have been broken down. . . . Some students of divinity and others, in their attempts to imitate brother Finney, have reminded us of the conduct and success of the seven sons of Sceva, who undertook to imitate Paul in Acts xix.

"The practice of females praying in promiscuous assemblies is considered as absolutely indispensable, so that nothing can be done without it. I am sorry to say that some young men have been considered as acting amorously foolish on this subject. Some of my brethren have been absolutely insulted by females on this subject.

"In the language of Dr. Griffin [then President of Williams College], 'It [the new Western measures] is complete *radicalism*. The means which it is said have been so successful at the West have been so caricatured by the *ignobile vulgus* in religion, running before brother Finney into every city and town, far and near, that I am sure he must labor under prodigious disadvantage in all these places, without shifting the entire mode of his attack.'" "Whoever," Nettleton goes on to say, "introduces the practice of females praying in promiscuous assemblies, let the practice once become general, will early find to his sorrow that he has made an inlet to other denominations, and entailed an everlasting quarrel on those churches generally."

From many pastors at the West there is said to come up the cry, "Brother Nettleton, do come

into this region and help us, for many things are becoming current among us which I cannot approve. And I can do nothing to correct them, but I am immediately shamed out of it by being denounced as an enemy of revivals.'

"So," he continues, "the bad must be defended with the good. This sentiment adopted will certainly ruin revivals. It is the language of a novice; it is just as the Devil would have it. If the friends of revivals dare not correct their own faults, who will do it for them? I know no such policy. I would no more dare to defend in the gross than condemn in the gross.

"Irregularities are prevailing so fast, and assuming such a character in our churches, as infinitely to overbalance the good that is left. The practice of praying for people by name, . . . as it now exists in many places, has become, in the eye of the Christian community at large, an engine of public slander in the worst form. For Zion's sake, I wish to save brother Finney from a course which I am confident will greatly retard his usefulness before he knows it. It is no reflection on his talents or piety that in his zeal to save souls he should adopt every measure which promises present success, regardless of consequences, nor, after a fair experiment in so noble a cause, to say, 'I have pushed some things beyond what they will bear.' The most useful lessons are learned by experience."

Such was the alarm felt by a large portion of the best Christian people in New England.

At this juncture Finney issued his first printed sermon, which added no little fuel to the flame. This was upon the text, "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos ii. 3.) It was originally preached in Utica, but was afterwards repeated in the Presbyterian church, Troy, March 4, 1827, and was published by request of the session.

The sermon is not doctrinal, but is based on the theory of Edwards, that virtue consists in a movement of the affections, and that its degree is to be measured by the strength of the affections. It was directed against those who were "at ease in Zion," and the preacher both assumed and asserted that the opposition to the revival arose from a low state of the religious affection on the part of the opponents. In defending this position, Finney argued that it is impossible to be interested in the words of a speaker whose "tone of feeling" on the subject under consideration is lower than our own, and, on the other hand, if the speaker's own feelings are aroused to a more exalted pitch than those of his hearers, they equally fail to be interested in his words. The hearers then set it down as enthusiasm, and are displeased with the warmth of expression "in which their own affections refuse to participate. Present to the ardent politician his favorite subject in his favorite light," he says, "and, when it has engaged his affections, touch it with the fire of eloquence, cause it to burn and blaze before his mind, and you delight him greatly.

But change your style and tone, let down your fire and feeling, turn the subject over, present it in a drier light, he at once loses nearly all his interest, and becomes uneasy at the descent. Now change the subject, introduce death and solemn judgment, he is shocked and stunned; press him with them, he is disgusted and offended." [1]

Dr. Nettleton refers to this sermon with a good deal of feeling, accepting the theory that it was prepared with reference to him, and to the opposition to new measures of which he had become the representative; and a perusal of the sermon, in the light of the criticisms which Finney and his measures were then undergoing, does, indeed, make it probable that it was designed for a defense of himself and of his work against various forms of opposition, but there are no personal allusions in it. Nettleton objected to the sermon on the ground that Finney makes no distinction between true and false zeal, and that therefore the view encourages self-righteousness, hypocrisy, and pride. "According to the principle of his own sermon," says Nettleton, "brother Finney and his friends cannot walk with God, for they are not agreed. It must be acknowledged that God has an infinitely higher tone and degree of holy feeling than brother Finney; he is not up to it. Consequently, on his own principles, they cannot be

[1] *Sermon* preached in the Presbyterian Church at Troy, March 4, 1827, by Rev. C. G. Finney, from Amos iii. 3, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Philadelphia: William F. Geddes. 1827.

agreed. God is displeased with him, and he with God. Brother Finney must 'necessarily' be displeased with high and holy zeal in his Maker, which so infinitely transcends his own; and the 'farther it is above his temperature the more he will be disgusted.'"[1]

About this time, also, Lyman Beecher wrote a long letter to Dr. Beman similar to the one which Nettleton had written to Aiken, but going less into particulars. He too had become thoroughly alarmed, and thought it necessary that the spread of the "new measures," as they were called, should be checked. In all this Beecher is charged by the "Christian Examiner"[2] with being actuated by an ill-regulated desire to retain the respect of the more cultivated people of New England for revival measures. In this letter Beecher compared the work in central New York to the last stages of the extravagances connected with Davenport's preaching in Boston, nearly one hundred years before, which had done much to bring such movements in general into discredit, and to check the progress of the revival influence connected with Edwards's labors.

Davenport and his followers were, according to Beecher, "the subjects of a religious nervous insanity. They mistook the feeling of certainty and confidence, produced by nervous excitement

[1] *Memoir of the Life and Character of Rev. Asahel Nettleton.* By Bennett Tyler, D. D. Boston: Congregational Board of Publication. 1856. Pp. 252, 253.

[2] March, 1829, p. 105.

and perverted sensation, for absolute knowledge, if not for inspiration; and drove the whirlwind of their insane piety through the churches with a fury which could not be resisted, and with a desolating influence which in many places has made its track visible to the present day. It was this know-certain feeling which emboldened Davenport to chastise aged and eminent ministers, and to pray for them and denounce them as unconverted, and to attempt to break them down by promoting separations from all who would not conform implicitly to his views by setting on fire around them the wood, hay, and stubble which exist in most communities, and may easily be set on fire, at any time, by rashness and misguided zeal; and so far as my observation extends, the man who confides exclusively in himself, and is inaccessible to advice and influence from without, has passed the bounds of sound reason, and is upon the confines of destruction.

"All your periodical Christians, who sleep from one revival to another, will be sure to blaze out now; while judicious ministers, and the more judicious part of the church, will be destined to stand, like the bush, in the midst of the flames; while these periodical Christians will make up by present zeal for their past stupidity, and chide as cold-hearted formalists those whose even, luminous course sheds reproof on their past coldness and stupidity. The converts, too, will catch the same spirit, and go forth to catechise aged Christians,

and wonder why old saints don't sing, and make the heavenly arches ring, as they do; and that shall come to pass which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, as the destruction of human society and the consummation of divine wrath upon man, when children shall be princes in the church, and babes shall rule over her, and the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honorable." [1]

As the "Christian Examiner" well says, these private letters were not eminently adapted to accomplish the purpose for which they were written. The result was that it seemed necessary at last for the Western brethren and the Eastern brethren to meet in friendly converse and compare opinions, with a view to future harmony and efficiency. To further this end, Beman went on to Boston to confer with Beecher, and between them it was decided to invite a number of representative Congregational and Presbyterian ministers from both sides to hold an early conference upon the questions at issue. Letters of invitation were at once sent out,[2] and the convention assembled at New Lebanon in July, 1827. This was not in any sense an ecclesiastical court, but simply a gathering of representative men from the East and from the West, upon their personal responsibility, to consider the situation and report to the Christian public upon it. Finney had nothing whatever to do with arranging

[1] *Christian Examiner*, March, 1829, pp. 119, 120.

[2] Beecher's *Autobiography*, vol. ii. p. 100.

for the convention, and he was not in any sense on trial. It was the measures which he and his coadjutors were employing which were on trial. Finney was simply one of the invited members.

The clergymen present were, from the East, Lyman Beecher, of Boston, Heman Humphrey, President of Amherst College, Asahel Nettleton, from Connecticut, Justin Edwards, of Andover, Mass., Caleb J. Tenney, of Wethersfield, and Joel Hawes, of Hartford, Conn.; from New York State, Asahel S. Norton, of Clinton, Moses Gillett, of Rome, N. S. S. Beman, of Troy, D. C. Lansing, of Auburn, John Frost, of Whitesborough, William R. Weeks, of Paris, Henry Smith, of Camden, Charles G. Finney, of Oneida County, George W. Gale, of the Oneida Academy, and Silas Churchill, pastor at New Lebanon.

Upon assembling, it was proposed by the Western pastors that the brethren from the East should enter into an inquiry concerning the truth of the reports which had been so widely circulated as to the irregularities connected with the revivals in question. But for some reason they declined to enter upon any such investigation, though all the chief actors in those revivals were present in the convention, and from personal knowledge could have answered every inquiry that could have been put to them. A resolution was introduced, stating that the object of the convention was "to see in what respects there is an agreement between brethren from different sections of the country in

regard to principles and measures in conducting and promoting revivals of religion." After a day's discussion, fourteen voted upon this, yes (Finney with them); one (Beman), no; and two (Frost and Aiken) declined to vote.

Upon the forenoon of the second day (July 19th), it was unanimously voted, "That revivals of true religion are the work of God's Spirit, by which, in a comparatively short period of time, many persons are convinced of sin, and are brought to the exercise of repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;

"That the preservation and extension of true religion in our land have been much promoted by these revivals;

"That, according to the Bible and the indications of Providence, greater and more glorious revivals are to be expected than have yet existed;

"That, though revivals of religion are the work of God's Spirit, they are produced by means of divine truth and human instrumentality, and are liable to be advanced or hindered by measures which are adopted in conducting them. The idea that God ordinarily works independently of human instrumentality, or without any adaptation of means to ends, is unscriptural;

"There may be some variety in the mode of conducting revivals, according to local customs, and there may be relative imperfections attending them, which do not destroy the purity of the work and its permanent and general good influence upon the

church and the world; and in such cases, good men, while they lament these imperfections, may rejoice in the revivals as the work of God."

The result of the afternoon's discussion was the adoption, by unanimous vote, of the following propositions: —

"There may be so much human infirmity, and indiscretion, and wickedness of man, in conducting a revival of religion, as to render the general evils which flow from this infirmity, indiscretion, and wickedness of man greater than the local and temporary advantages of the revival; that is, this infirmity, indiscretion, and wickedness of man may be the means of preventing the conversion of more souls than may have been converted during the revival.

"In view of these considerations, we regard it as eminently important that there should be a general understanding among ministers and churches in respect to those things which are of a dangerous tendency, and are not to be countenanced."

Before adjourning, however, Edwards, of Andover, introduced a proposition which brought the body nearer to one of the real questions at issue. It was that, "in social meetings of men and women for religious worship, females are not to pray." This was discussed all the next forenoon, and in the afternoon a motion was made by Aiken, seconded by Finney, that they postpone further consideration of the question until after they had made inquiry with reference to matters of fact. This

was voted down, when a vote upon the main question resulted in a tie; nine voting in favor, and nine declining to vote. It was then moved by Frost, and seconded by Finney, that the following question be answered, to wit: —

"Is it right for a woman in any case to pray in the presence of a man?"

For this there was offered, as a substitute, the proposition, that "There may be circumstances in which it may be proper for a female to pray in the presence of men." This was lost; eight, only, voting for it, and ten declining to vote.

On the 21st it was voted, on motion of Edwards, that "it is improper for any person to appoint meetings in the congregations of acknowledged ministers of Christ, or to introduce any measures to promote or conduct revivals of religion, without first having obtained the approbation of said ministers." Finney, with twelve others, voted for this proposition, while five, consisting of the pastors in central New York, declined to vote, recording as a reason, "that *there may be some cases* where the elders or members of a minister's own church may appoint and conduct prayer-meetings without having consulted the minister, or obtained his approbation, but in no case ought such elders or members to appoint or conduct such meetings contrary to the will of the pastor; and these meetings ought to be *occasional*, and not *stated*." Then followed a proposition to which there was unanimous agreement, namely, "Those meetings for social religious

worship in which all speak according to their own inclinations, are improper; and all meetings for religious worship ought to be under the presiding influence of some person or persons." The next proposition was not so easy to formulate. They were not prepared to vote that the "calling of persons by name in prayer ought to be carefully avoided," but were all agreed that "the calling of persons by name in *public* prayer ought to be carefully avoided."

Monday was spent in discussions which resulted in the adoption of the proposition that "audible groaning in prayer is, in all ordinary cases, to be discouraged; and violent gestures and boisterous tones, in the same exercise, are improper." Fourteen voted in favor of this, including Finney, and three declined voting. All were agreed, also, to the proposition that "speaking against ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, in regular standing, as cold, stupid, or dead, as unconverted, or enemies to revivals, as heretics, or enthusiasts, or disorganizers, as deranged or mad, is improper."

On the following day there was unanimous consent to the proposition of Edwards that "the existence in the churches of evangelists, in such numbers as to constitute an influence in the community separate from that of the settled pastors, and the introduction, by evangelists, of measures, without consulting the pastors, or contrary to their judgment and wishes, by an excitement of popular feeling which may seem to render acquiescence un-

avoidable, is to be carefully guarded against, as an evil which is calculated, or at least liable, to destroy the institution of a settled ministry, and fill the churches with confusion and disorder." It was also voted that "language adapted to irritate, on account of its manifest personality, such as describing the character, designating the place, or anything which will point out an individual or individuals before the assembly, as the subjects of invidious remark, is, in public prayer and preaching, to be avoided." Five, among them Finney, declined voting; Messrs. Lansing and Aikin giving the following as their reason: "The undersigned do decline voting on the foregoing particular, not because they do not most unequivocally condemn such personality in preaching as makes an invidious exposure of individuals, but because they suppose that the article in question may be liable to such construction as to lead many to say that such characteristic preaching is condemned by this convention as is adapted to make sinners suppose that their individual case is intended."

It was also unanimously agreed that "all irreverent familiarity with God, such as men use towards their equals, or which would not be proper for an affectionate child to use towards a worthy parent, is to be avoided;" that "from the temporary success of ardent young men, to make invidious comparisons between them and settled pastors; to depreciate the value of education, or introduce young men as preachers without the usual qualifi-

cation, is incorrect and unsafe;" that "to state things which are not true, or not supported by evidence, for the purpose of awakening sinners, or to represent their case as more hopeless than it really is, is wrong;" that "unkindness and disrespect to superiors in age or station is to be carefully avoided;" that "in promoting and conducting revivals of religion, it is unsafe and of dangerous tendency to connive at acknowledged errors, through fear that enemies will take advantage from our attempt to correct them;" that "the immediate success of any measure, without regard to its scriptural character, or its future and permanent consequences, does not justify that measure, or prove it to be right;" that "great care should be taken to discriminate between holy and unholy affections, and to exhibit with clearness the scriptural evidences of true religion;" that "no new measures are to be adopted, in promoting and conducting revivals of religion, which those who adopt them are unwilling to have published, or which are not proper to be published to the world."

In the afternoon the propositions did not carry such universal consent. It was now time for the brethren from New York, fresh from their scenes of revival, to introduce some resolutions on their side, with a view of rebuking the spirit of opposition with which they had to contend. To begin with, Beman submitted the following self-evident and innocent proposition: "As human instrumentality must be employed in promoting revivals of

religion, some things undesirable may be expected to accompany them; and as these things are often proclaimed abroad and magnified, great caution should be exercised in listening to unfavorable reports." Eleven voted in favor of this proposition, but six — namely, Norton, Beecher, Tenney, Weeks, Weed, and Edwards — declined to vote, putting on record that, "as the above does not appear to us to be in the course of Divine Providence called for, we therefore decline to act."

Beman's second proposition met with a similar reception, and was as follows: "Although revivals of religion may be so improperly conducted as to be attended with disastrous consequences to the church and souls of men, yet it is true that the best conducted revivals are liable to be stigmatized and opposed by lukewarm professors and the enemies of evangelical truth." To this was appended the same caveat as before by the six Eastern men, namely: "As the above does not appear to us to be in the course of Divine Providence called for, therefore we decline to act."

A similar division and protest was made upon the following propositions: "Attempts to remedy evils existing in revivals of religion may, through the infirmity and indiscretion of man, do more injury and ruin more souls than those evils which such attempts are intended to correct." "The writing of letters to individuals in the congregations of acknowledged ministers, or circulating letters which have been written by others, com-

plaining of measures which may have been employed in revivals of religion; or visiting the congregations of such ministers and conferring with opposers, without conversing with the ministers of such places, and speaking against measures which have been adopted; or for ministers residing in the congregations of settled pastors to pursue the same course, thus strengthening the hands of the wicked, and weakening the hands of settled pastors, are breaches of Christian charity and ought to be carefully avoided." "In preaching the gospel, language ought not to be employed with the intention of irritating or giving offense; but that preaching is not the best adapted to do good, and save souls, which the hearer does not perceive to be applicable to his own character." But to the two following propositions there was unanimous agreement: "Evening meetings continued to an unreasonable hour ought to be studiously avoided." "In accounts of revivals of religion, great care should be taken that they be not exaggerated." This was on Tuesday, July 24. The convention continued for two more days, engaging in free discussion, conversation, and devotional exercises, and then adjourned.

The work of the convention, when published to the world, became the subject of an unusual amount of discussion in the religious papers. According to all reports, the sessions had been amicable, though Mr. Nettleton, who had not been heartily in favor of the convention, and whose

health, as we have said, was seriously shattered, absented himself from most of the meetings. The full effects of the convention upon Beecher's mind were not seen at once, but on his way home he dropped a casual remark in presence of the landlord of the hotel where he stopped for dinner, on the east side of the mountains, which revealed as clearly as words can do the most important result of the conference. "We crossed the mountains," said he, "expecting to meet a company of boys, but we found them to be full-grown men."

In the course of a few months, the letters of Beecher and Nettleton which led to the convention were published, and were freely commented upon in pamphlets and correspondence, and it became more and more evident that Beecher and his friends had been misinformed as to the facts, and that there was nothing seriously objectionable in the new measures connected with Finney's revivals. At the meeting of the General Assembly in Philadelphia in the next May, the following document was signed and published:[1] —

The subscribers having had opportunity for free conversation on certain subjects pertaining to revivals of religion, concerning which we have differed, are of the opinion that the general interests of religion would not be promoted by any further publications on those subjects, or personal discussions; and we do hereby engage to cease from all publications, correspondences, conversations, and conduct designed and calculated to keep

[1] *Christian Examiner*, March, 1829, p. 115.

those subjects before the public mind; and that, so far as our influence may avail, we will exert it to induce our friends on either side to do the same. [Signed:]

Lyman Beecher.	Ebenezer Cheever.
Derick C. Lansing.	John Frost.
S. C. Aikin.	Nathan S. S. Beman.
A. D. Eddy.	Noah Coe.
C. G. Finney.[1]	E. W. Gilbert.
Sylvester Holmes.	Joel Parker.

PHILADELPHIA, *May* 27, 1828.

Thus was a most important truce declared between the followers of Nettleton and Beecher and the friends of Finney.

[1] Finney, in his *Memoirs*, p. 223, says he has no recollection of signing such a paper, but his signature is unquestionably upon it.

CHAPTER IV.

SUBSEQUENT EVANGELISTIC LABORS.

It is gratifying to relate that the convention at New Lebanon was conducted throughout in such a spirit that it did not seriously interfere with the revival which had been in progress in the place. Soon afterwards Finney was invited to labor in Wilmington, Del., with Rev. Mr. Gilbert, whose home was in New Lebanon, and who had become familiar with Finney's work while on a visit there. While at Wilmington, Finney was invited to preach twice a week for some time in the church of Rev. James Patterson, of Philadelphia. So great was the interest in this city that a little later it was thought expedient for him to devote his whole time to Philadelphia. Here he preached in turn in nearly all of the Presbyterian churches with great effect, and continued in this way without intermission until August, 1828. To satisfy the demand, at one time, he was compelled to repeat his sermon on the text, "There is one God and one Mediator between God and man," seven different evenings in succession in as many different churches. In the autumn of 1828, it was deemed best that he should preach steadily in one place, and a German church, the largest in the

city, was selected. Here he continued until the close of 1829, with no abatement in the revival interest.

During the winter of 1829–30, Finney labored with his usual success in Reading, and then for a short time in Lancaster, Pa. After a few weeks' visit to his home in Oneida County, New York, he was induced by Anson G. Phelps, a well-known philanthropist, to come to New York city. From the late William E. Dodge, Mr. Phelps's son-in-law, we learn that this invitation was extended only after mature consideration and correspondence. The well-known opposition of Nettleton and Beecher had led the clergy of New York to look upon Finney with much suspicion; so that, according to Mr. Dodge, there was not a Presbyterian church or any other church in the city that would have invited him. Under these circumstances, it was difficult to persuade Finney to come to the city at all. But Mr. Phelps corresponded with Dr. Lansing, of Auburn, and through him overcame Finney's hesitation. A vacant Presbyterian church in Vandewater Street was hired by Mr. Phelps, and Finney was accompanied to New York by Drs. Lansing and Beman, who for a week remained with him at the house of Mr. Phelps, and held a succession of prayer meetings with reference to the work about to be commenced. After three months, a Universalist church in the neighborhood of Niblo's Garden was for sale, and, as affording a more eligible audience-room, was

purchased by Mr. Phelps, and here the meetings were continued for a year longer, Finney preaching to crowded audiences almost every night. Long "before the year was up," says Mr. Dodge, "there were many churches that would have been delighted to invite him to come to them." [1] Among the converts were many leading lawyers and other prominent business men of the city. It was at this time, also, that the strong attachment between Finney and the two Tappans, Arthur and Lewis, began, and that the foundations were laid for their future influence in connection with his labors. As a result of these meetings in New York city, the First Free Presbyterian Church was formed (so called because the seats were free), to accommodate those not heretofore in attendance upon any church.

Leaving New York city in the summer of 1831, for a few weeks' rest with Mrs. Finney's parents at Whitestown, Oneida County, Finney was urged while there to supply for a time the vacant pulpit of the Third Presbyterian Church in Rochester. On account of local dissensions, the opening seemed unpropitious. On calling some friends together at Utica to help him to decide whether to go to Rochester, or to some one of the other fields which were open to him, they with one consent advised him to return to New York or Philadelphia, rather than go to Rochester. To this view he assented, and they left him, expecting that on

[1] William E. Dodge in *Reminiscences*, p. 33.

the next morning he would take the canal boat with his family for the East. But during the night his mind was deeply wrought upon with the conviction that he ought not to shrink from the work at Rochester. Greatly to the surprise of his friends at Utica, therefore, Finney with his family embarked the following morning on the packet boat going west instead of east.

The revival in Rochester was remarkable for its extent, its depth, the class of people brought under its influence, and as a preparation for subsequent labors of Finney in the same city. Though the population in 1831 was only about 10,000, the number of converts in the city alone was upwards of 800, while large numbers in all the surrounding towns were affected by the movement. As a result, 1,200 united that year with the churches of the Rochester Presbytery, besides the large number whose affiliation was with other denominations. At this time, as at later periods of revival under Finney's preaching in Rochester, the leading citizens of the place were the first to be moved. Nearly all of the lawyers, judges, physicians, merchants, bankers, and master mechanics of the city were among the converts; so that, according to unquestionable testimony,[1] "the whole character of the city was changed. . . . And the city has been famous ever since for its high moral tone, its strong churches, its evangelical and earnest minis-

[1] Rev. Charles P. Bush in *Reminiscences of Charles G. Finney*, p. 14 *seq.*

try, and its frequent and powerful revivals of religion. . . . Those who know the place best ascribe much of all the good that has characterized it to the shaping and controlling influence of that first grand revival. Even the courts and prisons bore witness to its blessed effect. There was a wonderful falling off in crime. The courts had little to do, and the jail was nearly empty for years afterwards." It is said, also, that no less than forty of the young men who were converted entered the ministry. All classes of society were equally influenced. "The only theatre in the city was converted into a livery stable, the only circus into a soap and candle factory," the "grog shops were closed," and "a new impulse was given to every philanthropic enterprise."

It was at Rochester that Finney first introduced into his own meetings the practice of inviting persons forward to "the anxious seat." Previous to this time, his efforts to bring his hearers to an immediate decision had been limited to invitations to "an inquiry meeting," or, when the interest warranted it, those in the audience who were seriously considering the question of their religious duties were asked to rise, and by that act publicly commit themselves to the service of God. As Finney recognized no intermediate position between a state of disobedience and a state of obedience, he never adopted a formula of invitation which implied such a state. He did not ask his hearers to do anything which would intimate that

any progress had been made in becoming reconciled to God previous to an entire surrender of their will to the Divine Will. When he introduced into his services the so-called "anxious seat," the invitation was to those who were ready to repent of their sins, and to consecrate their whole hearts to God. Such were invited to respond at once in a public committal, and were asked to separate themselves from the world, and to come forward to specified seats, where there would be opportunity for personal conversation and direction.

The opposition to the anxious seat arose largely from its theological significance, since the Old School Calvinists were not willing to admit that the human will possessed that self-determining power implied in these urgent appeals to immediate submission. In their view, there was little natural connection between the means used for the persuasion of men and their conversion. According to their theory, conversion could only follow regeneration, and that was a mysterious process wrought directly by God on the hearts of the elect. Instead of urging men to immediate repentance, it was the habit of the preachers of this school to urge their hearers to use the means of grace, and wait on the Lord for Him to transform their tastes and desires according to his sovereign grace; whereas Finney always proceeded upon the assumption that there was nothing but the perverse will of the sinner which, at any time, prevented him from becoming an inheritor of the divine promises. Consequently

his preaching always had in view immediate results, and he always proceeded upon the theory that the proper province of the preacher related to the action he was to elicit from his hearers, and he so set forth the gospel scheme in accordance with this theory as to sweep away every excuse for man's inaction. Finney's use, therefore, of the anxious seat must be interpreted in connection with his whole system of theology. It should be remarked, however, that he had no inordinate attachment to any particular measure, and did not employ any with unvarying uniformity. He was more afraid of formality than of almost anything else.

In connection with this account of Finney's labor in Rochester in 1831, it will be profitable to glance forward to his subsequent labors in the same city, which occurred in 1842 and 1856. On each of these occasions the invitation came from the lawyers of the city as he was passing through, toward Oberlin, on his way from the East. On both occasions, also, the results were equally striking with those in 1831. In 1842, another revival was in progress in the city in connection with the preaching of the famous Jedediah Burchard. As Burchard largely drew the common people, Finney's audiences were composed of the most intelligent portions of the people, including the lawyers who invited him, almost in a body. As he proceeded from night to night with his lectures addressed especially to them, the interest increased, and finally culminated, without any call on Finney's

part, in a spontaneous movement, in which the lawyers, almost *en masse*, arose one evening and expressed their determination henceforth to live Christian lives, and to acknowledge God before the world.

In the winter of 1855–56, the request from the lawyers was that he would give them a course of lectures on "The Moral Government of God." The lectures then given resulted in the conversion of large numbers of the class inviting him, as well as in an extensive work throughout the whole community. On each of these occasions it is estimated that the converts were not less than one thousand.

The last time he was at Rochester, the First Presbyterian Church refused to unite with the other churches in support of Finney. The following letter, addressed to me in answer to inquiries, therefore has special value in attestation of the genuineness of the work: —

EVELYN COLLEGE, PRINCETON, N. J., *May* 4, 1890.

DEAR SIR, — In answer to your note of March 29th inquiring for particulars of Mr. Finney's labors in Rochester while I was there, I am happy to say that I regard them as connected with the greatest work of grace I have ever seen in any of the churches. I was not in sympathy with it at the time, and would not admit Mr. Finney into the pulpit of the First Church, of which I was then pastor; but I have long been convinced that I was totally wrong, and have since taken occasion to say so to the church itself. During the revival Rochester rocked to its foundations. Great numbers of hopeful

converts were added to all the churches during his labors. You are at liberty to make what use of these statements you please.

Very truly yours,
J. H. McIlvaine.

But, going back to the spring of 1831, when Finney closed his first season of labor at Rochester, we must follow him briefly in subsequent years. He started East on an urgent invitation from Dr. Nott, President of Union College, Schenectady, to hold revival meetings which should be accessible to the students under his care. It was on this journey that, as previously related, Finney was invited to preach at Auburn to the very congregation and people who had with so much spirit turned away from him five or six years before, and in the course of six weeks five hundred were converted.

From Auburn he was called to Buffalo, where the same influential classes were reached by the means of grace as at Rochester, though not to an equal extent.

In the autumn of 1831, he went by invitation to preach for a while at Providence, Rhode Island, and while there received a request from the Congregational ministers and churches of Boston to labor in that city. The change in public sentiment can be appreciated only by recalling the strength of Beecher's opposition four years before, when he had said to Finney: "Finney, I know your plan, and you know I do; you mean to come to Connecticut and carry a streak of fire to Boston.

But if you attempt it, as the Lord liveth, I'll meet you at the State line, and call out all the artillerymen, and fight every inch of the way to Boston, and then I 'll fight you there." [1] The true magnanimity and sincerity of Beecher appear in the fact that now he headed the invitation to have Finney come to Boston. This was brought about, it seems, by a chance meeting between Finney and Catherine Beecher. Some one had written to Finney about his coming to Boston, but upon this meeting with Miss Beecher, Finney said: "Your father vowed solemnly at the New Lebanon Convention he would fight me if I came to Boston, and I shall never go there until he asks me." "So," as Beecher says, "we wrote and invited him, and he came, August, 1831, and did very well." [2]

In Boston, as elsewhere, marked results attended the preaching. Dr. Edward Beecher writes, under date of November 6, 1889: "I was pastor of Park Street Church when he [Finney] was first invited to preach in Boston, and I invited him to preach for me. He complied with my request, and preached to a crowded house the most impressive and powerful sermon I ever heard. . . . No one can form any conception of the power of his appeal. It rings in my ears even to this day. As I was preaching myself, I did not hear him again. But I met good results in all who heard him, and have ever honored and loved him, as one as truly com-

[1] Beecher's *Autobiography*, vol. ii. p. 101.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

missioned by God to declare his will as were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Paul." [1]

Finney's preaching in Boston, however, was not followed either at this time or at any other by such a general movement as in some other places. At four subsequent periods Finney labored in Boston, namely, in the winters of 1842, 1843, 1856, and 1857. During the first and second of these, he preached in Marlborough Chapel; on the last two occasions, in Park Street Church. At all these times, extensive revivals attended his ministry, and it is the universal testimony of the members of Park Street Church surviving from that time that the conversions were characterized by greater permanence than were those brought about in connection with the labors of any other revivalist whom they have had with them.

In the summer of 1832, Finney was invited again to New York city, at this time to preach in the Chatham Street Theatre, which Lewis Tappan and others leased for the use of the Second Free Presbyterian Church, which had grown out of the movement inaugurated by Finney two years before. This was the year of the famous visitation of the cholera. In the midst of the installation services, Finney was taken down with the disease; and, though he recovered, his prostration was so great that he was unable to preach till the following spring. Upon resuming his labors with the church,

[1] See, in this connection, Professor Park's account of Finney's preaching in Andover, Mass., *ante*, p. 71.

though he was still somewhat feeble in health, he preached twenty evenings in succession at the outset. As a result, there were as many as five hundred converts, making the church so large that a colony was formed to organize another, which occupied a building on the corner of Madison and Catherine streets. From this time on, the number of meetings was diminished, but the revival continued for two years, in the course of which no less than seven churches grew out of the movement. Toward the close of this period, Finney became so dissatisfied with the difficulties of administering discipline through the Presbyterian forms of procedure that his friends decided upon organizing a Congregational Church, and proceeded to build the Broadway Tabernacle. When the building was completed, he took his dismission from the Presbytery, [1] and became pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle Congregational Church, which, with slight reorganization, is the same as that of which Dr. Joseph P. Thompson and Dr. William M. Taylor subsequently became pastors.

During Finney's New York pastorate, many events occurred of both public and private significance. He found his own health badly broken down at the beginning of 1834, and was advised to take a sea voyage. Consequently he embarked in the midst of winter upon a small brig, bound for

[1] Finney was released from the Presbytery March 2, 1836. The church became Congregational, and its name was erased from the roll of the Presbytery on the 13th of the following June.

the Mediterranean. The weather was stormy; his quarters were close; the captain was given to strong drink; and so the voyage was not a satisfactory means of recuperation. But it enabled him to spend a few weeks in Malta and Sicily, and added to his experience some vivid scenes connected with storms at sea which often furnished illustrations for his sermons in subsequent years. Here, too, his knowledge of seamanship, early acquired on Lake Ontario, was put to practical use. At one time, when a storm was raging and the vessel was in great peril, and the captain was disabled by drink, the command of the ship temporarily devolved on Finney. But he was equal to the occasion; and, indeed, his imperial qualities were such that he really appeared at his best in such a position. Finney was absent on this voyage about six months, and naturally, as he was approaching his native shore again, with his health not much improved, his mind was deeply agitated over the question how his revival work should be carried on without him. This anxiety culminated in a day of great distress, in which he gave himself to prayer during almost the whole time. The experiences of this day, and the peace of mind which followed it, were always looked back to with the greatest interest and encouragement, and had much to do with his readiness soon after to undertake the work of educating ministers at Oberlin.

In connection with Finney's first period of labor in New York city, the "New York Evangelist"

was started, for the express purpose of representing, as its name indicates, the revival interests of the period. The first number was issued March 6, 1830, and Finney assisted in its preparation. The paper soon obtained a large circulation, especially when, after two years, Rev. Joshua Leavitt became its editor. Leavitt was an ardent anti-slavery advocate, and Finney was by no means an indifferent spectator of the anti-slavery conflict, speaking his mind freely in his sermons, though never giving any large amount of time or strength to the discussion. But his position was well known; if not from what he himself said, at any rate from the character of the men who sustained him in his church, prominent among whom were the brothers Arthur and Lewis Tappan, and now at length Mr. Leavitt. The practical caution of Finney's mind is well illustrated in his parting advice to Leavitt, when about to set sail upon the voyage just referred to, which was that Leavitt should be careful not to go too fast in the discussion of the anti-slavery question, lest he should destroy his paper.

Leavitt, however, was not able to follow the advice. The times had not been favorable for the calm exercise of judgment. His first greeting to Finney upon his return from the Mediterranean voyage was, "I have ruined the 'Evangelist' by my advocacy of radical anti-slavery measures." This confession was the basis of an appeal to Finney to write for the paper a series of articles on revivals, in order to increase the subscription list.

In response to this appeal, Finney at once began giving a series of revival lectures, which Leavitt reported, and printed from week to week in his paper. Finney's hold upon the religious public appears in the result. The publication of the lectures acted like magic, and subscriptions to the paper began to pour in beyond all precedent. Of the character and effect of these lectures we shall speak in another place.

The fall and winter of 1834–35 witnessed a continuous and deep revival in connection with Finney's preaching in the Tabernacle, and plans were taking shape for establishing a course of theological lectures with the special design of training persons for revival work. A theological lecture-room had been provided with such an end in view, and arrangements were in progress for the completion of the scheme, when events occurred which led to the transfer of that part of Finney's work to Oberlin, and to the establishment of a theological seminary at that place.

After his removal to Oberlin, Finney ordinarily devoted three or four months of the year to revival efforts in other places. Reference has already been made to his later work in Rochester and Boston. In addition to this, he preached for short periods in revival meetings in Cleveland and Cincinnati, Ohio; in Detroit and other places in Michigan; in Western, Rome, and Syracuse, New York; and in Hartford, Conn. In the autumn of 1849, he went to England, and labored continuously in revivals

in various places for a year and a half, nine months of the time in London.[1] In 1858, he returned to England, and was absent from home nearly two years, preaching at various places both in England and in Scotland. During both of these visits to England his labors were unremitting, and the revivals attending his preaching were continuous and most extensive.

While he was in Oberlin, during all this period, scarcely a year passed without an extensive religious awakening among the great crowd of incoming students. After 1860, his strength was not sufficient to warrant his undertaking to preach in other places. But in connection with this portion of his life in Oberlin, the years 1860, 1866, and 1867 were marked by special revivals

This bare recital of Finney's later labors will convey a false impression if we fail to record that theoretically he was strongly opposed to "spasmodic efforts" at promoting revivals. His views on this point were most fully set forth in a series of thirty-two letters on revivals which he furnished to the "Oberlin Evangelist" in the years 1845 and 1846. In the seventeenth and eighteenth letters, he tells us that from the first his practice was to add to the services of the Sabbath only "as many meetings during the week as could well be attended, and yet allow the people to carry forward their necessary worldly business." And he pronounces it a grand error to attempt to promote re-

[1] For a fuller account of his work in London, see chapter ix.

vivals by breaking in for a while on all the ordinary and necessary duties of life, and making every day a Sabbath for a number of weeks in succession, thus forcing the attendants, in order to maintain their business, to neglect all further meetings except on the Sabbath.

In a subsequent letter, he sets forth the importance of holding protracted meetings when the people are most free from the pressing cares of business. While guarding against the dangers of spasmodic efforts, therefore, he recommends and beseeches the churches "to make special and extraordinary efforts at every season of the year when time can be spared from other necessary avocations to attend more particularly to the great work of saving souls."[2]

[1] *Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. vii. p. 171.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 195.

CHAPTER V.

REMOVAL TO OBERLIN.

In the summer of 1835, Finney removed to Oberlin to begin his career as educator. The circumstances which led to this change of base, and which gave such marked and long-continued success to his labors there, should now be detailed with considerable fullness.

Reference has already been made to his association, in New York city, with Arthur and Lewis Tappan, two business men of great energy and skill, who were, at that time, in the midst of a most successful mercantile career. In addition to their interest in the revival measures characterizing the period, they were among the first to take an active part in promoting the anti-slavery cause. Indeed, it may be said that the initiation and early direction of that movement were more dependent upon the activity of Arthur Tappan than upon that of any other one man. With his wealth he was able, by well-directed pecuniary aid, to make himself felt at every point of need.

But the anti-slavery cause by no means absorbed all of Tappan's energies. This was only one of many efforts on his part to help on enterprises designed to improve the general condition of his

fellow-men. He was foremost in the temperance reformation. He was a faithful supporter of John McDowell in his efforts to repress licentiousness in New York city. He was an earnest and practical advocate of the strict observance of the Lord's Day. The New York "Journal of Commerce" was founded by him in 1827 for the express purpose of elevating the character of the daily press, and of demonstrating that a daily paper of the highest character could be published without involving any Sunday labor. He took radical grounds against the use of tobacco. In his opposition to slavery he had naturally interested himself in the objects of the American Colonization Society, organized in 1816 in aid of a movement which for many years was supposed to be one of the necessary steps to the final abolition of slavery. As time went on, he was one of the first to perceive that this society was really an ally of slavery, and a main supporter of the spirit of caste which he so much despised. But he had gone so far at one time in the support of this society as to contemplate establishing a line of packets between New York and the colony of Liberia for opening trade with the interior of Africa. His confidence in the society, however, was shaken by finding that ardent spirits, tobacco, and powder and balls were leading articles of trade at the colony, and were considered indispensable in making up an invoice of goods to be sent thither. He therefore at length came to believe, with many others, that he had been

drawn into the society under a delusion, and that the effect of its work was to foster the system of caste by aiming to get rid of the free colored people, thus giving additional security to the system of slavery in this country.

Opposition to the Colonization Society rapidly became the test question as to one's real attitude towards slavery; and Arthur Tappan was among the first to join hands with Garrison in criticising its aims and opposing its progress. In 1831, while residing temporarily in New Haven, Conn., he, with Rev. Mr. Jocelyn, planned a college for colored people in that city, for which Tappan was to supply the necessary funds. But a hue and cry was raised, a public meeting was called by the mayor, and amidst great excitement it was "*Resolved*, by the Mayor, Aldermen, Common Council, and freemen of the city of New Haven, in meeting assembled, that we will *resist* the establishment of the proposed college in this place by every lawful means."[1] In view of this, the scheme was abandoned. Soon after, in the autumn of 1832, Miss Prudence Crandall, a member of the Society of Friends and a successful teacher, at the invitation of friends in Canterbury, Conn., had purchased a large house for the establishment of a school for young ladies. A worthy colored girl of the village, who was a member of the village church, and who all her life had attended the public schools, applied for admission. Her application was resisted by the

[1] *The Life of Arthur Tappan*, p. 150.

citizens, and, upon Miss Crandall's determination to admit the girl, all her other pupils withdrew. Seemingly the only course left was to establish a school exclusively for colored girls. She made an announcement accordingly, and her school was filled with pupils of this class gathered from a wide range of country.

But as in New Haven, so in Canterbury, the citizens gathered together in town-meeting to abate the nuisance, and passed resolutions similar to those passed in New Haven. As this was not effective, they appealed to the state legislature, and speedily secured a law making it a misdemeanor to establish in Connecticut any school or literary institution for the education of colored persons not inhabitants of the State. The passage of this law was received in Canterbury with the firing of cannon, the ringing of bells, and a general demonstration of delight. Under its provisions, Miss Crandall was arrested on the 27th of June, and, after imprisonment in a felon's cell for one night, was bound over for trial before the county court in August. Her adviser was Rev. Mr. May, a Unitarian minister in an adjoining town. On learning the facts, Arthur Tappan wrote to Mr. May, promising to be his banker, and instructing him to spare no necessary expense, to employ the best legal counsel, and to let the great question of the constitutionality of the law be fully tried. Tappan soon after visited May and Miss Crandall, and, on seeing the hostility of public sentiment,

authorized May to establish at once a newspaper in which he could get a hearing for the truth. Accordingly the "Unionist" was started, and put under the editorship of C. C. Burleigh, Mr. Tappan paying the bills, together with those incurred in the trial of Miss Crandall.

In 1830, Garrison, while editing an anti-slavery paper in Baltimore, in company with Benjamin Lundy, was thrown into prison and subjected to a fine for having commented severely upon a ship captain from his native town of Newburyport, Mass., who had consented to take slaves as freight from Baltimore to New Orleans. On hearing of this, Arthur Tappan paid the fine, released Garrison from prison, and had an interview with him as he passed through New York, on his way home to Boston, a few weeks after. Garrison immediately established the "Liberator." To this enterprise, also, Tappan gave considerable support, subscribing for a large number of copies to be sent to different individuals.

In March, 1833, Tappan established in New York city the "Emancipator," which became one of the most influential anti-slavery organs. During the same year, he was one of the first to recognize the great merits of John G. Whittier, who had recently published a pamphlet at Haverhill, Mass., upon "Justice and Expediency; or, Slavery considered with a View to its Rightful and Effectual Remedy, Abolition." Of this, Whittier had ventured to print only five hundred copies. But

Tappan, on reading it, at once ordered the issue of five thousand copies at his own expense, and it became one of the most important factors in increasing abolition sentiment in the country.

During the same year, the Tappans, in company with a few others, issued an immense number of anti-slavery tracts, and sent them broadcast over the land, besides giving direct assistance to the "New York Evangelist," edited by Joshua Leavitt, and to the "Genius of Temperance," edited by William Goodell, both of which gave much space to the anti-slavery discussion.

As a result of all these influences, public sentiment was now wrought up to such a state that it seemed best to organize an anti-slavery society in New York city. Consequently a call was issued for a convention on the 2d of October, 1833, to accomplish this purpose, and Clinton Hall was chosen as the place of meeting. Immediately upon the announcement of this meeting, the following placard [1] was posted in the streets of the city: —

NOTICE. — To all persons from the South. All persons interested in the subject of a meeting called by J. Leavitt, William Green, Jr., William Goodell, John Rankin, and Lewis Tappan, this evening at seven o'clock, are requested to attend at the same hour and place.

MANY SOUTHERNERS.

NEW YORK, *October* 2, 1833.

From this it was clear that a riot was imminent, and the owners of the hall withdrew their permis-

[1] *Emancipator*, August 6, 1834.

sion for its use. The mob, however, gathered, but, not finding their victims, they adjourned to Tammany Hall to adopt denunciatory resolutions and listen to inflammatory speeches. Meanwhile the Tappans offered the use of one of the lecture-rooms in Chatham Street Chapel, where Finney was pastor, and the society completed its organization as soon as possible. Hardly was this done, and the constitution adopted, with the election of Arthur Tappan as president, when the mob, to the number of two thousand or more, appeared at the gates of the building, shouting, "Garrison! Garrison! Tappan! Tappan! Where are they? Find them! Find them! Ten thousand dollars for Arthur Tappan!" But Tappan and his associates had escaped through a back way, and the mob entered the lecture-room only to find it empty.

The excitement among the men of a baser sort was increased by the utterances of the press and of various eminent representatives of the Colonization Society. At a meeting on the 10th of October, Chancellor Walworth referred to the members of the Anti-slavery Society as "visionary enthusiasts" and "reckless incendiaries," whose proposition was unconstitutional and dangerous. At the same meeting, David B. Ogden, Esq., denounced them as "fanatics and zealots." On the 4th of December, the American Anti-slavery Society was organized at Philadelphia, and, though not present, Arthur Tappan was elected to the presidency of the society, an office which he cheerfully accepted,

and the duties of which he laboriously performed. He also subscribed three thousand dollars annually for its work. Under his administration, auxiliaries multiplied all over the country; anti-slavery publications were scattered far and wide; and anti-slavery lecturers appeared everywhere throughout the free States.

Though the reform was conducted with rare discretion, as the annual reports and other publications of the society abundantly show, opposition to the movement became more and more violent. On the 4th of July, 1834, about the time Finney returned from his voyage to the Mediterranean, arrangements were made for a meeting in his chapel to celebrate the Declaration of Independence. Mr. David Paul Brown, an eminent lawyer and philanthropist from Philadelphia, was to give the address, but a noisy mob took possession of the room, and made it impossible to go on with the exercises. After several vain attempts to proceed, the meeting closed amid the hurrahs of the rioters. This was on Friday. The papers of the city laid the blame of these irregularities, not on the mob, but on the "Tappanists," who, they said, produced them. During the following week, the city was kept in a ferment by incendiary editorials in the pro-slavery papers. On the evening of the 7th, a meeting of colored people in the chapel was violently interrupted by a mob, and a portion of the furniture was destroyed. Upon the following evening, the mob again gathered in front of the chapel,

under the impression that there was another meeting to be broken up. Finding that they were mistaken, they went over to the Bowery Theatre, where an objectionable actor was performing, and broke up the play. Thence they proceeded to Rose Street, to the house of Lewis Tappan, who with his family was absent in the country, broke in the doors and windows, piled the furniture in the streets, and made a bonfire of it. On Thursday, the mob surged backward and forward in the vicinity of the house of Lewis Tappan, and made threatening demonstrations against Arthur Tappan's store, but little damage was done. On Friday, riotous demonstrations were again numerous: the church of Dr. Samuel Hanson Cox, a warm friend of the Tappans, was attacked, likewise a Presbyterian church on Spring Street, and the streets were barricaded. Total demolition of the buildings was prevented only by the appearance of the military. A church for colored people on the corner of Leonard and Church streets was also attacked, and several of their houses were demolished and a large number of others more or less injured. The same day, the mob reappeared in Pearl Street before Tappan's store; but on learning that a well-trained body of clerks was inside, abundantly armed to give them a deadly reception, they withdrew without inflicting serious injury. By this time, the whole city was alarmed, and effectual measures were taken by the mayor to suppress further disturbances. The papers, however,

did not cease to vent their spite upon Arthur Tappan and his associates, some of them going so far as to urge their indictment as public nuisances.

But, as already said, the promotion of an anti-slavery sentiment was only a small portion of Arthur Tappan's comprehensive designs. He was, first of all, a broad-minded, simple-hearted Christian man, resolved on administering his stewardship in the fear of God and for the good of his fellow-men, and we can trace the effects of his far-sighted benevolence in almost all the philanthropic and religious enterprises that originated during the busy portion of his life. In 1820, he gave $5,000 to the American Sunday-school Union to establish schools in the valley of the Mississippi; and in the same year he endowed a scholarship in the theological seminary at Andover. We find him active, at an early period, in promoting interest in the American Bible Society and the American Tract Society, giving $20,000 to the latter for the purpose of erecting its building on Nassau Street. As a manager of the American Bible Society he was among the most urgent in devising methods to provide every family in the United States with a Bible, giving $5,000 to the object, in 1828. In 1826, the year of its organization, he became a director of the American Home Missionary Society, and was its auditor for thirteen years. Unknown to the public, he had in 1823, the most critical period of its history, given $15,000 to Auburn Theological Seminary to establish the Rich-

ards Professorship. About the same time, he contributed also to the founding of a professorship in Kenyon College at Gambier, Ohio. He was likewise active in founding the theological seminary at New Haven. In 1828, he offered to pay $3,000 a year, for four years, to meet the tuition of students in Yale College preparing for the ministry. Amherst College, also, depended upon him for similar aid. He was for some years president of the American Education Society, and for a longer time chairman of its executive committee, giving regularly and largely to its funds.

Among the other educational enterprises in which he was interested was Lane Theological Seminary, an institution which was founded for the education of Presbyterian and Congregational ministers, at Walnut Hills, a suburb of Cincinnati. The building up of this institution was part of Tappan's general scheme for promoting the higher interests of the great Mississippi valley. It was through his influence largely that Lyman Beecher was persuaded to leave his important work in Boston, in 1832, and become senior theological professor in the above-named institution, Tappan subscribing a generous sum for the endowment of the chair. Upon the consummation of Beecher's connection with Lane Seminary, there was a remarkable influx of students, a large number from the Oneida Institute — in which Tappan was greatly interested, and which was then under the charge of Beriah Green — being among the first

to avail themselves of the rare opportunities afforded at Walnut Hills. To these students Tappan forwarded liberal sums of money, which were specially to be used in sustaining schools among the colored people of Cincinnati.[1]

But opposition to the anti-slavery movement gave a sudden and unlooked-for change to affairs in Lane Seminary. The students began to discuss the merits of the Colonization Society, and, with the approbation of Mr. Beecher, formed an anti-slavery society. The interest in these discussions very soon after became so great that the trustees were alarmed, and advised the students to suspend the discussions altogether. During the vacation in 1834, while Beecher was absent in New England, the trustees went so far as to issue a positive order "that the students be required to discontinue those societies [the Anti-slavery and Colonization] in the seminary," and laid down the doctrine that "no associations or societies ought to be allowed in the seminary except such as have for their immediate object improvement in the prescribed course of study;" and students were forbidden "to communicate with each other on the subject, even at the table in the seminary commons." This was more than the students could brook, and to the number of fifty or more (at least four fifths of the whole) they withdrew in a body, and took possession of a building offered them by a benevolent gentleman in Cummingsville, a few

[1] *The Life of Arthur Tappan*, p. 236.

miles away, where for five months they continued their studies together, with such instruction as they could afford each other; Dr. Bailey, afterwards editor of the "National Era," giving them a course of lectures on physiology.[1] The state of affairs at Lane Seminary, of course, greatly distressed Tappan. Of these young men, Beecher was saying, before large public audiences at the East, that they were "a set of noble men, whom he would not at a venture exchange for any others."[2] Among them were numbered James A. Thome and William T. Allen, sons of slaveholders, but who were ready to suffer expatriation, and disinheritance even, rather than stifle their convictions on so important a question.

On his return West, Beecher, while passing through New York, had an interview with Arthur Tappan and a few other friends of the anti-slavery cause, and tried to persuade them that the differences between the friends of the Colonization Society and those of the Anti-slavery Society were not so great but that they could be harmonized without material sacrifice of opinion and feeling. But Tappan had thought too long upon the subject to be convinced by Beecher's arguments, and freely yet kindly expressed his dissent. Beecher acknowledged that the course of the trustees in Lane Seminary was indefensible, and said that he would never consent to the suppression of discussion among the students.

[1] *Oberlin: The Colony and the College*, pp. 54, 55.

[2] *The Life of Arthur Tappan*, p. 228.

On his arrival at Cincinnati, Beecher found that the trustees were immovable in their determination. He attempted to persuade the students to remain, however, in hope that the order would not be executed, and that after a little time it might be repealed. But to this they were too high-spirited to consent. Upon the consummation of the withdrawal of these students, Arthur Tappan offered to furnish them $5,000 to provide instruction for the remainder of their course, and conferred with Finney as to the feasibility of his going there temporarily for that purpose.

It is at this critical juncture that Oberlin comes into the field, and we have in the result one of those remarkable providences that keep alive the sense of God's continual agency in the direction of human affairs. In 1833, Rev. John J. Shipherd and Philo P. Stewart (afterwards a successful inventor and manufacturer of stoves in Troy, N. Y.) established a colony and an educational institute in the township of Russia, Lorain County, O., thirty-three miles west of Cleveland and ten miles south of Lake Erie. Their plans were similar to many others of the day, for elevating the standard of education and religion in the Mississippi valley. Among others, Nelson, author of "The Cause and Cure of Infidelity," started an enterprise of a similar sort in Missouri, and succeeded in procuring considerable funds in New York for his project. Oberlin is one of the few such schools and colonies which proved successful, and it is evident that

its success is due to that remarkable conjunction of events which led Finney to cast in his lot with the enterprise.

The location of Oberlin was determined by the gift of an unimproved tract of land owned by parties in New Haven, Conn. The donation consisted of five hundred acres of level, stiff clay soil, heavily covered with timber, at an elevation of 250 feet above the lake. This was in the centre of a larger tract which the same parties had for sale at moderate rates, which was mostly sold to the colonists with the promise that a portion of the proceeds should form an endowment for the college. The name of the place was chosen out of admiration for John Frederick Oberlin, the distinguished French pastor of Alsace, in the Vosges Mountains, the fame of whose Christian philanthropy had then just reached America. The families constituting the colony were largely gathered from Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, where Mr. Shipherd had a wide acquaintance. These subscribed a covenant in which the degeneracy of the church was lamented, the importance of building up institutions of Christian learning in the valley of the Mississippi was emphasized, and dependence upon the counsel of the Lord was acknowledged. They pledged themselves to hold in possession no more property than they could profitably manage as faithful stewards of God, and to practice industry and economy, that they might have as much as possible to appropriate for the spread of the gos-

pel. They expressed it as their intention to eat only plain and wholesome food, to renounce all bad habits, especially the use of tobacco, and the drinking of even tea and coffee as far as practicable. They expressed it as their purpose also to discard unwholesome fashions of dress, to observe plainness and durability in the construction of their houses and furniture, and to provide for the widows and orphans of the colony as for their own families. They also affirmed their determination to maintain a deep tone of personal piety, to provoke each other to love and good works, to live together in all things as brethren, and to glorify God in their bodies and spirits. But it was not a communistic covenant: all the property was held in personal right. Nor did the covenant serve any practical purpose in settling such disputes as afterwards arose. Its principal value was in sifting out from the applicants those who were not actuated by the purest of motives. The result was the collection at Oberlin of a class of pioneers of very high character.

A school was opened upon the 3d of December, 1833, when only eleven families were on the ground. Both sexes were admitted, and half of the forty-four attendants were from the East. In February, 1834, a charter was obtained under the name of Oberlin Collegiate Institute, which was changed to Oberlin College in 1850. The first circular announced it as one of the designs of the school to secure "the elevation of female character, by bring-

ing within the reach of the misjudged and neglected sex all the instructive privileges which have hitherto unreasonably distinguished the leading sex from theirs." [1] During the next summer, there were in attendance one hundred and one students, who filled every available room in the settlement. Everything was new and rough. Roads had been cut through the forest, indeed, but they were still full of stumps, and an agile and enterprising boy could almost cross the college square upon them without touching the ground. The little opening was surrounded on every side by an impenetrable wall of gigantic forest trees. Scholarships had been issued at the rate of one hundred and fifty dollars each, entitling the donor perpetually to the privileges of the school for a single pupil. The plan of the school contemplated all departments of instruction, from "the infant school up through the collegiate and theological courses." The first college class was organized in October, 1834, and consisted of four young men. But Western Reserve College was already well established and under an able corps of teachers at Hudson, about forty miles away, and to sober observers the scheme of Mr. Shipherd and Mr. Stewart seemed chimerical in the extreme.

Late in the autumn of 1834, the trustees authorized Mr. Shipherd to go East for the purpose of securing funds and a president. From a note in Mrs. Shipherd's diary, it appears that her husband

[1] *Oberlin: The Colony and the College*, p. 41.

decided to go to New York by way of Cincinnati, in response to an impulse of which he could give no satisfactory account to himself, and entirely without the knowledge of the condition of affairs in Lane Seminary.

This statement is confirmed by the account given by President Mahan,[1] according to which an almost irresistible impression came over Shipherd's mind, while he was engaged in prayer on the subject, that he should go to Cincinnati before going to New York. Although he could give no reason for this impression, in obedience to it he started south instead of east. After he had passed over the first 150 miles of the journey, and had reached Columbus, he found the traveling so bad and his own strength so exhausted, that he determined to abandon the project of visiting Cincinnati, and was about to take the national road, — a macadamized highway just completed by the government from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi, — and go directly to New York. At the hotel he chanced to meet Theodore Keep, the son of Rev. John Keep, president of the Oberlin board of trustees. Young Keep had recently graduated from Yale College, and had been to Cincinnati to join Lane Seminary, but on learning the condition of the institution, had turned back and was on his way home. From him Mr. Shipherd learned the state of affairs at Lane Seminary and the attitude of

[1] *Autobiography: Intellectual, Moral, and Spiritual.* By Rev. Asa Mahan, D. D., LL. D. (London, 1882), p. 190.

Rev. Asa Mahan, the only one of the trustees who had openly espoused the cause of the protesting students. Mahan was then pastor of the Sixth Presbyterian church, now the Vine Street Congregational, of Cincinnati. Keep suggested to Shipherd that Mahan would be an admirable president for Oberlin, and urged Shipherd by all means to go on and call upon him.

The only public conveyance between the cities was a two-wheeled cart, drawn by four horses, upon which was a rude box holding the mail. Into this open box, with the mail bags, Shipherd threw himself, and was in due time drawn over the horrid midwinter roads to the thriving metropolis upon the Ohio River, 150 miles away. He called upon Mahan, visited the protesting students in their quarters at Cummingsville, and became convinced that Mahan was indeed admirably fitted for the presidency, and that John Morgan, one of the instructors who sided with the students, was a proper person for a professorship which he was commissioned to fill. The protesting students assured him also that, if these appointments should be made at Oberlin, they would all go there and join the institution at the beginning of the spring term.

When this plan was unfolded to Mahan, he at once assented to it. On the 15th of December, 1834, Shipherd wrote from Cincinnati, urging the trustees to appoint Asa Mahan president and John Morgan professor of mathematics, at the same time saying that neither of these men would accept the

appointment unless the trustees would also give assurance that students would be received into the institution irrespective of color.

This letter having been dispatched, Mahan and Shipherd, without delay, though keeping their plans to themselves, set out together for the East to obtain an endowment and to find a professor of theology. Their first purpose was to secure for that position Theodore D. Weld, an early convert of Finney. Weld had recently been a student at Lane Seminary, but was now devoting his splendid abilities to lecturing against slavery. Ascending the Ohio River to Ripley, they called upon Rev. John Rankin, the distinguished abolitionist, and with his team drove thirty miles north to Hillsborough to make the contemplated proposition to Weld, who at that time was giving a course of anti-slavery lectures there. Weld at once replied to them that he himself was not the man to undertake the work proposed at Oberlin, but that Rev. Charles G. Finney was, and that they ought to go to New York city and make proposals to him. Weld thought Finney would listen to the call at that time, because his health was so greatly impaired that it was doubtful if he could continue his former activity in evangelistic labors. In accordance with this advice, they started on immediately for New York, and, upon arriving, at once made their errand known to Finney and his friends. What was Shipherd's dismay, however, to receive information that the trustees at Oberlin

had voted that until more definite information should come before them, they did not feel prepared to pledge themselves to receive colored students. But with his usual hopefulness he maintained his courage, and wrote an importunate letter to the trustees, urging the claims of the colored people from every point of view, stating that they would doubtless be received into all such institutions by and by; why should Oberlin be the last to do them justice? He added, as a clincher, "The men and money which would make our institution most useful cannot be obtained if we reject our colored brother. Eight professorships and ten thousand dollars are subscribed, upon condition that Rev. C. G. Finney become professor of theology in our institute; and he will not come unless the youth of color are received. Nor will Professor Mahan nor Professor Morgan serve unless this condition is complied with; and they all are the men we need, irrespective of their anti-slavery sentiments. If you suffer expediency and prejudice to pervert justice in this case, you will in another. Such is my conviction of duty in the case, that I cannot labor for the enlargement of the Oberlin Collegiate Institute if our brethren in Jesus Christ must be rejected because they differ from us in color. . . . I have pondered the subject well with prayer, and believe that if the injured brother of color, and consequently brothers Finney, Mahan, and Morgan, with eight professorships and ten thousand dollars, must be rejected, I

must join them, because by so doing I can labor more effectually for a lost world and the glory of God, — and, believe me, dear brethren and sisters, for this reason only."

The reception of this letter created no small amount of discussion and excitement in Oberlin, where, it appears, all but Mr. Shipherd and two or three students were still attached in sentiment to the Colonization Society. The trustees were called together at Mr. Shipherd's house on the morning of February 9th, and it became evident that they were very likely to exclude colored pupils. Mrs. Shipherd, in the midst of her household cares, was not uninterested in the result, as she was fully in accord with her husband. John Keep, temporary chairman, also sympathized with her views, and took pains in the midst of the deliberations to inform her that it was extremely doubtful how the matter would turn. Mrs. Shipherd at once dropped her work, and collected her female friends in a neighboring house, where they devoted themselves to unceasing prayer until the decision should be announced. The vote was a tie, and was carried in favor of the admission of colored students only by the casting ballot of the chairman. The resolution itself is so indirect and peculiar as to be worthy of record : —

" Whereas, There does exist in our country an excitement in respect to our colored population, and fears are entertained that on the one hand they will be left unprovided for as to the means

of a proper education, and on the other that they will in unsuitable numbers be introduced into our schools, and thus in effect forced into the society of the whites, and the state of public sentiment is such as to require from the board some definite expression on the subject; therefore, resolved, that the education of the people of color is a matter of great interest, and should be encouraged and sustained in this institution." [1]

On such a delicate balance of influences did the future of Oberlin turn. But the end was accomplished. After the adoption of this resolution, Finney was elected professor of theology. Arthur Tappan gave the promised $10,000 for the erection of a building, and secured a loan of $10,000 more for other buildings, while several other gentlemen united with him in engaging to pay quarterly the interest upon $80,000 to provide salaries for eight professors at $600 each, intending eventually to pay the principal as a permanent endowment.

President Mahan came on to Oberlin the following May, and with his family occupied the first log house that had been erected, until, with the means furnished from New York, the president's house could be built. The protesting students of Lane Seminary, to the number of thirty, came soon after, and at once a senior theological class of fourteen was formed. To provide accommodations for them, "Cincinnati Hall" was erected. This

[1] *Oberlin: The Colony and the College*, p. 64.

was one story high, one hundred and forty-four feet long, and twenty-four feet wide. Its sides, partitions, ceilings, and floors were of beech boards fresh from the mill. On the outside it was battened with slabs retaining the bark of the original tree. One end of the hall was fitted up as a kitchen and dining-room, and the remainder was divided into rooms twelve feet square, with a single window to each, and a door opening out upon the street.

Professors Finney and Morgan came upon the ground in June, and began their teaching in such cramped quarters as the place furnished. Tappan Hall, with four lecture-rooms and a dormitory, was speedily erected, however, together with two commodious brick buildings for the families of President Mahan and Professor Finney. The colonists soon after erected a wooden building, also, which in the upper story provided other dormitories, while the lower story was devoted to the joint purposes of chapel and church. Until this was built, Finney preached in the dining-room of the new boarding-house, which had just been erected. But to secure at once a more commodious place of meeting for the larger gatherings in Oberlin, and to facilitate evangelistic services in the neighborhood, the friends of Finney, by small subscriptions sent in principal part to the editor of the "New York Evangelist," provided a tent one hundred feet in diameter, capable of holding an audience of three thousand. There was a streamer at the top

of it, on which was written in large characters, "Holiness unto the Lord." This was dedicated and first used in connection with the Commencement in July, 1835.

The plan of Finney and his associates in New York did not originally contemplate the surrender of all his work in that city. The long vacation at Oberlin was placed in the winter, like that of most other schools at this time, and Finney was expected to spend only about one half of the year with his classes, and to return to his church for the rest of the year. This he did for two seasons. But finding his health impaired, and the double burden too great to carry, he resigned his pastorate, and was dismissed by advice of the New York Association, April 6, 1837, to devote himself more exclusively to his work at Oberlin, where he continued to be the guiding and inspiring spirit for a period of forty years.

This is, perhaps, the best place to mention that, among other trials through which Finney and his coadjutors at Oberlin were so soon called to pass, not the least was the embarrassment connected with the commercial crisis of 1837. On the 16th of December, 1835, the very year in which Tappan and his friends had so liberally promised to endow the institution, a disastrous fire occurred in New York city, and Tappan's store was burned to the ground. From the effects of this, however, he was rapidly recovering, when the influence of the approaching financial storm, which overwhelmed

almost every firm in the country, began to be felt in his business, and the suspension of his house was publicly announced in May, 1837. From this it never rallied, and Tappan at length went into bankruptcy. Oberlin had actually received but ten thousand dollars of what he had promised to give, and that was in a building; thus, in this time of business depression, the friends of the institution were compelled to lay their financial foundations anew. The difficulties of the situation were extreme; but through the faith and patience of Finney and his associates, they were able to hold on until funds came in which were sufficient for the present need. A large part of this help came from anti-slavery friends in England.

CHAPTER VI.

FINNEY AS AN EDUCATOR.

The identification of Finney with the new enterprise at Oberlin was in itself an education to the world. Oberlin was henceforth to stand as the representative of those ideas and plans of work which had crystallized around the free church movement in New York city, as it had been fostered by Arthur Tappan and his associates, and as it was finally embodied in the Broadway Tabernacle Congregational Church. The movement was evangelical in its doctrinal basis, exalted in its conception of the attainable standard of Christian life, comprehensive in its employment of means and measures, and exacting in its demands upon all the activities of the human soul. From this it will be seen that Oberlin was as far as possible from being a place of one idea. The prominence which it at once attained as a centre of anti-slavery influence has prevented many persons from seeing and appreciating its equal or even greater prominence in other lines of activity. Finney himself was never forward as an anti-slavery agitator, but was a preacher of the gospel from first to last. Even writing and teaching were but an episode in his career. Anti-slavery agitation

was hardly even that. We look in vain in his sermons for any formal discussion of the subject of slavery. His references to it, both in his preaching and in his writing, were frequent and forcible, indeed, but they were casual, and were brought in as illustrations, rather than as his main proposition. But he was as fearless upon this point as upon every other, and was openly and heartily in sympathy with Arthur Tappan, and with the whole anti-slavery movement as represented by the American and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, with which he and his associates were connected.

The conditions respecting the admission of colored students upon which Finney came to Oberlin were a lesson in themselves, infinitely more important as a testimony to a principle than as a practical means of accomplishing direct results. For at the time these conditions were formulated and accepted, there were no negroes clamoring for admission within college walls. One solitary colored student followed the Lane Seminary protestants to Oberlin.[1] "Others soon came, but not in large numbers. From 1840 to 1860 the proportion of colored students was four or five per cent. Soon after the war the ratio rose to seven or eight per cent., but fell again to three or four per cent. No adaptation of the course of study to the special needs of colored pupils was ever made. It was not a colored school that was proposed, but a school

[1] *Oberlin: The Colony and the College*, p. 74.

where colored students should have equal privileges with others." [1]

Nevertheless, the great end, so far as bearing testimony against slavery and caste is concerned, was attained, and it is difficult to overestimate the importance and extent of Oberlin's influence upon the anti-slavery sentiment of the country. In view of the events leading to the election of Lincoln, to the war, and to the abolition of slavery, Finney was amply justified in saying that in that contest Oberlin "turned the scale in all of the Northwest." [2] Yet, as already remarked, Finney's part in this work was largely incidental, as he himself and Arthur Tappan expected and intended it should be. Tappan had written to him: "I do not want you to spread an abolition flag, but carry out your design of receiving colored students upon the same conditions that you do white students; and see that the work be not taken out of the hands of the faculty, and spoiled by the trustees, as was the case at Lane Seminary. Just let it be known that you thus receive students, and work your own way on, the best you can. Go and put up your building as fast as possible, and for whatever deficiency of funds there may be, after making efforts through your agents, you may draw on me, and I will honor your drafts to the extent of my income from year to year." [3]

[1] *Oberlin: The Colony and the College*, pp. 111, 112.

[2] Letter to Arthur Tappan in *The Life of Arthur Tappan*, p. 421. For further particulars, see chapter ix.

[3] *The Life of Arthur Tappan*, pp. 239, 240.

The year 1835 is conspicuous in the history of the anti-slavery struggle. On July 29th, when the United States mail-boat from New York reached Charleston, S. C., it was announced by the papers that the mail contained much incendiary literature for circulation throughout the South, and a call was made upon the people to take effectual measures to prevent its reaching its destination. This incendiary literature consisted chiefly of copies of "The Emancipator," "The Anti-slavery Record," and "The Slave's Friend," addressed to respectable free citizens, and really contained nothing contrary to the Constitution and laws of the United States, or designed to incite insurrection among the Southern slaves. In all cases, the address was, not to the slave, but to the master. Nevertheless, such was the excitement that an attack was made upon the post-office by a mob, and the postmaster took upon himself the responsibility of separating the proscribed newspapers and pamphlets from the rest of the mail, and of surrendering them for destruction. They were accordingly taken out upon the parade ground in front of the citadel, and burned to ashes in the presence of an immense crowd. This was at eight o'clock in the evening. "The effigies of Arthur Tappan, Dr. Cox, and W. L. Garrison were at the same time suspended. At nine o'clock the balloon was let off, and the effigies were consumed by the neck, with the offensive documents at their feet." [1]

[1] *Charleston Courier*, July 30, 1835, quoted in *The Emancipator* for September, 1835.

Upon the 3d of August, a committee of twenty-one, composed of prominent citizens, with ex-Senator Hayne at their head, were appointed to take charge of the United States mail. Meantime, the postmaster-general at Washington, Amos Kendall, was asked to sanction the course pursued. He replied that, as postmaster-general, he had no legal authority to exclude any species of newspapers, magazines, or pamphlets, and that any letter of his directing or sanctioning such exclusion would be void, and would not relieve them from responsibility. At the same time he had no hesitation in saying that he was deterred from giving the order only by want of legal power, and that, if he were situated as they were, he would do as they had done, adding: "As a measure of public necessity, therefore, you and the other postmasters who have assumed the responsibility of stopping these inflammatory papers will, I have no doubt, stand justified in that step before your country and all mankind;" whereupon he argues that it is extremely doubtful if the state laws prohibiting the circulation of such literature would not protect postmasters and mail-carriers at the South from indictment by the United States government for interference in such cases with the freedom of the mails.

Soon after this, President Jackson, in his Annual Message to Congress, recommended "the passing of such a law as will prohibit, under severe penalties, the circulation in the Southern States,

through the mail, of incendiary publications intended to instigate the slaves to insurrection." A bill was accordingly introduced by Calhoun to accomplish the result, in defending which he says that in issuing these incendiary documents the abolitionists were not waging war so much against the lives of the slaveholders as against their character; and the editor of the "United States Telegraph" averred that what they had to fear from this abolition excitement was, not a servile war, but a discussion which would alarm the consciences of the weak and feeble among the slaveholders themselves, and diffuse among them a morbid sensibility on the question of slavery. In view of this state of feeling, and with the tacit approval of the postmaster-general, the postmaster of the city of New York took upon himself the responsibility of stopping all the publications of the American Anti-slavery Society mailed to persons residing in slave States, whether sent gratuitously or to regular subscribers.[1]

About the same time a reward, of $20,000 was offered for the delivery of Arthur Tappan upon the levee at New Orleans. During July, also, Amos Dresser, a Lane Seminary student and an inoffensive colporteur, was arrested at Nashville, Tenn., for selling a copy of Rankin's "Letters on Slavery," and for having in his possession copies of "The Anti-slavery Record" and of "The

[1] *Third Annual Report of the American Anti-slavery Society* (1836), p. 45.

Emancipator" wrapped around copies of the Cottage Bible which he was selling. After an informal trial before a committee, — two of whom were preachers, and seven of whom were elders in the Presbyterian Church, — he was publicly flogged before a great crowd of excited people, and forced to leave the city upon the following day, also to suffer the loss of nearly all of the three hundred dollars' worth of books in his possession, which he was compelled to leave behind. Naturally Dresser came with the rest of the Lane Seminary students to Oberlin, and was himself a most instructive object-lesson.

Close upon these events came mobs thick and fast in various portions of the country. A call was issued for the formation of a State Anti-slavery Society in Utica, New York, on October 21st. Immediately the press began to thunder its anathemas upon the approaching meeting. Flaming handbills called the citizens of Utica together on the 8th of October, for the purpose of expressing their sentiments in anticipation of the meeting. This gathering was addressed by eminent men, one of whom amid cheers declared that the calling of an abolition convention at Utica was "intended to degrade the character of the city in the esteem of the world, and to insult us to our faces. . . . We are to be picked out as the headquarters of Abolitionism in the State of New York. Rather than to have this, I would almost as soon see the city swept from the face of the earth, or sunk as low

as Sodom and Gomorrah. Nothing is due to these men if they come here." [1] On the 17th of October, there was another assembly convened to express hostility to the approaching meeting, when, though a majority of the common council had granted permission for the holding of the abolition convention on the 21st, it was resolved that the people would "not submit to the indignity of an abolition assemblage being held in a public building of the city, reared as this was by the contributions of its citizens, and designed to be used for salutary public objects and not as the receptacle for deluded fanatics or reckless incendiaries." This assembly adjourned to meet at the same place, day, and hour appointed for the anti-slavery convention.

When the delegates of the anti-slavery convention gathered in Utica on the 21st, they found the court-room, where they were to meet, in the possession of the "peaceable citizens" who had determined by the above mentioned means to frustrate the ends of the convention. The delegates, however, quietly retired and assembled in the Bleecker Street church. When they had proceeded so far as to complete their organization and to adopt a constitution, the transactions were brought to a sudden close by the arrival of a committee of twenty-five from the other meeting, who, with a great number of followers, crowded into the church and interrupted the business by

[1] *The Emancipator*, November, 1835.

a peremptory call for adjournment. At this, such an uproar was raised that it was impossible to proceed, and the convention adjourned; whereupon the mob went to the hotels and demanded the expulsion of the abolition delegates. As these were departing, their carriage wheels were held by the mob, and volleys of blasphemous oaths were poured out upon their heads. Not content with this, the mob, proceeded to the printing-office of the "Standard and Democrat," which had favored the convention, and sacked the building, throwing the type into the street.

On the same day, similar but even more revolting scenes were occurring in Boston. The Boston Female Anti-slavery Society was to have held a meeting on the 14th of October in Congress Hall, to be addressed by the celebrated English reformer, George Thompson. All the other halls and chapels had been refused, and upon perceiving the excited condition of the public, the owner of this refused his consent the day before the meeting, and the papers were full of inflammatory articles approving of any measures which should prevent Mr. Thompson's address. The ladies, nothing daunted, advertised a meeting for the 21st at the office of William Lloyd Garrison's paper, the "Liberator," No. 46 Washington Street. But Thompson's name was not mentioned in connection with the address, and, indeed, the ladies had determined not to have him present.

On the morning of the 21st, a handbill was ex-

tensively circulated through the city, announcing that, as "the infamous foreign scoundrel Thompson will hold forth this afternoon at the 'Liberator' office, No. 46 Washington Street, the present is a fair opportunity for the friends of the Union to snake Thompson out," and a purse of one hundred dollars was offered to the first one who should lay hands on him and bring him to the tar-kettle before dark. In response to this, about two thousand "highly respectable gentlemen" assembled in the vicinity of the "Liberator" office, and crowded all of the passages to it, shouting, "Hurrah for Judge Lynch!" The mayor entered, and begged the women to go home, as he could not protect them. Garrison had been in and had offered to address them, as he had often done before, but was advised not to do so now, and he had therefore withdrawn and secreted himself in a shop near by. But he was hunted out by the mob, his clothes were nearly torn from his body, and a rope was put around him preparatory to leading him to the Common, with the intention of giving him a coat of tar and feathers, and of ducking him in the Frogpond. But on the way he was intercepted by the mayor, who, to preserve Garrison's life, put him into a cab, in which he was hastily driven through the city and thrust into the jail, where he was kept over night. Upon the following day, he was privately taken out of the city, so as to prevent further disturbance.[1] But the meeting of the Female Anti-

[1] *Life of William Lloyd Garrison* (New York, 1885), vol. ii. chap. i.

slavery Society was not prevented. The ladies met soon after in a private house, and the anti-slavery excitement, instead of being abated, was fanned to a flame by the action of the mob.

On this very day, also, Samuel J. May, whose assistance to Miss Crandall in Connecticut has already been referred to, while attempting to address a meeting in Montpelier, Vt., was unceremoniously interrupted by a mob of leading citizens.

It was in July of this same year that James G. Birney, subsequently the abolition candidate for the presidency, who a short time previously had emancipated his slaves in Kentucky, was driven from his home to New Richmond, Ohio, where he began the publication of a paper called the "Philanthropist," devoted to the subject of immediate emancipation. Upon removing to Cincinnati a few months later, he was waited upon by a committee of thirteen, having at its head a lawyer of eminence who had been Judge of the Supreme Court of Ohio and United States Senator, and was warned to desist from the further publication of his paper, under threat of a mob which would endanger both his life and his property. On the evening of the following day, when it was seen that he did not comply with this request, the mob gathered, and, not finding Mr. Birney at his home, wreaked their vengeance upon various houses of poor colored people, then pillaged the office, scattered the type, and broke the press and threw it into the river.

Such were a few of the exciting scenes which marked the year 1835, during which Oberlin opened its doors to colored students, and Finney began his work there through the aid and support of Arthur Tappan. The advocacy of immediate abolition was freely spoken of as treason against the government, and, to cap the climax, the Abolitionists were denounced as "vilifiers of the good name of George Washington," who had lived and died a slaveholder.

The protesting students from Lane Seminary took up their quarters in Slab Hall, at Oberlin, in the summer. As the winter vacation approached, they, with others who had joined them in coming to Oberlin, added fuel to the flame of excited public sentiment by devoting the long winter vacation to lecturing upon the subject of slavery.

Under the auspices of the American Anti-slavery Society, of which Tappan was president, the larger part of them went throughout Ohio and portions of Pennsylvania, and did their utmost to expose the horrors of the American system of slavery. Everywhere the greatest interest was aroused. Friends rallied around them and cheered them by their sympathy, while enemies resorted to every device to harass, oppose, and discredit them.

These were times when there was special danger of alienation between the advocates of the anti-slavery reform and the leaders of evangelical thought and action. The influences were actively at work which led eventually to the dismember-

ment of the American Anti-slavery Society on lines which set its advanced members in antagonism to the churches of the land, and led to the formation, in 1840, upon a distinctively Christian basis, of the American and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, of which Arthur Tappan, again, was chosen president. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Finney's influence through the agency of Oberlin in maintaining this alliance between evangelical Christianity and the anti-slavery movement, though, as has been remarked, Finney himself said comparatively little upon the subject. Occasionally he appeared and spoke at the anniversaries of the Anti-slavery Society; sometimes also he participated in the political meetings held in Oberlin, when distinguished speakers from abroad were present to make addresses, and always to the astonishment and delight of these visitors and the vast audiences assembled. It is related that upon one such occasion, after John P. Hale and Joshua R. Giddings had made their most effective addresses, Finney followed with a speech so comprehensive, logical, forcible, and eloquent as entirely to eclipse those of the great statesmen. But in the position occupied by Finney, he did not need to speak often, or to say much upon the subject. The Lane Seminary students were full enough — probably too full — of anti-slavery zeal. Finney, while not holding them back by any direct efforts, felt the importance of preserving the balance of forces, and devoted his main strength to supplying

their lack, and to developing in them an adequate appreciation of the central themes of the gospel, which give motive power and direction to every well-chosen effort at reform.

His position can be inferred from a sermon upon the relation of Christ to the believer, reported in the "Oberlin Evangelist," July 30, 1845, in which he inveighs with his characteristic force of utterance against the folly of making science and politics a substitute for Christ in preaching. It would seem that one of the theological students had been out lecturing on mesmerism and phrenology. At thought of this he exclaims, "Alas, I cannot tell you how much my soul has been agonized to think that there could be a theological student here who could do this! Oh, let him only be full of Christ, and he will lecture on something very different from mesmerism and phrenology. Let all these young men be filled with Christ, and this institution can shake the world." In still another paragraph he declares in the strongest terms that young men with their souls filled with the love of Christ will not go about lecturing on politics, and telling people how to vote for president.

So much misunderstanding was occasioned by a report of this sermon that, a few weeks later, Finney took pains to define his position in a letter, in which he says that his lectures on pastoral theology amply show that he is not opposed to sermons on politics at the proper time; that every department of human conduct is to come under review in the

pulpit, and in its place be made the subject of discussion. But he maintains that "care should always be taken to put and keep the gospel right end foremost, so to speak; that is, that the truths of fundamental importance should always have the greatest prominence. . . . The thing which seems to me wise in ministers, in regard to their public teaching upon the subject of politics, is to hold forth in their public praying and preaching incidentally and by way of inference and remark, on almost all occasions, enough to keep the people's minds informed on all important points, and then it will never be necessary for them to leave their congregations or turn aside and give themselves up wholly to preaching and lecturing upon politics, on the Sabbath or on any other day."

As may be surmised, Finney came to Oberlin without a formulated system of theology in his mind. Guided largely by his own deep experience and diligent study of the Bible, and stimulated by the various emergencies of his revival efforts, however, he had firmly seized hold of the salient and central themes of the evangelical system. The character of his labors had naturally brought him into sympathy with what were called the New School Presbyterians of that day, and, up to a short time previous to his coming to Oberlin, his ministerial standing was in the Presbyterian Church. His transfer to the Congregationalists was not owing to any change in doctrine, but was due simply to his views respecting the mode of

church government. The commencement of his teaching in Oberlin was the commencement, also, of his systematic study of theology.

In the class-room he identified himself with his pupils as himself a learner, seeking not only for the truth as it was generally formulated, but for its best statement and its most satisfactory foundation and defense. His method, therefore, was largely analytic and inductive. He set his students at work, much according to the modern so-called "seminary method," to originate statements of doctrines and truths for themselves, after careful reading and study. These they would bring in to the class to serve as the basis for criticism and discussion.

From all accounts it would seem that he was a most inspiring teacher, and secured in his pupils a definiteness of opinion and a self-reliance rarely equaled in the class-room. One of his earliest pupils thus describes his methods: "A theme was assigned to each one, on which, after due preparation, he must discourse, and then 'be picked.' It set us all to thinking. The theme that at one time was given to me was Imputation, a doctrine which was then much discussed; and I well remember how I stood for three days and was questioned."[1] Another of this first class in Oberlin says: "Coming as I did from the statelier ways of New England, it was some time before I could make it seem natural to address him simply as 'Brother Finney.'

[1] Rev. George Clarke in *Reminiscences of Rev. C. G. Finney*, p. 49.

. . . With all this freedom of intercourse, however, I do not remember any abuse of it on the part of his pupils, any impertinence of speech or manner. There was so much of true dignity in him, that he must be a very boorish or reckless person who could treat him otherwise than with the utmost respect." [1]

Finney was very careful to give due credit to the students for any original statements of the truth which they might have devised. One of those early students relates how Finney came to his room one morning and waked him up, to inform him that he — the student — had been correct the previous day, and himself wrong, in the statement of some intricate theological proposition.

There was such naturalness about all this, that the simplicity of Finney's heart, as well as the strength of his mind, made a great impression upon the students. In their contact with him in those early days of his teaching, they seemed, as it were, to have an insight into the inner recesses of his heart, and beheld the interior processes of his thought. A member of the class relates that when Finney lectured to them upon the subject of the atonement, so vivid was the presentation that, before they knew it, all found themselves in tears, with their pencils motionless in their hands. A member of the first class in theology, which graduated in 1836, relates that at the close of the last

[1] Rev. Leonard S. Parker in *Reminiscences of Rev. C. G. Finney*, p. 45.

term, when Finney came into the class-room and looked around upon its members, his eyes filled with tears as he began to offer the opening prayer. But instead of the brief sentences which ordinarily sufficed, his prayer was prolonged for half an hour, and then, as there was no disposition on the part of the class to rise from their knees, the whole hour was spent in devotion.

One of the class of 1838 records, also, that one morning, as the members were drawing toward the close of their course, and at the time when suspicion and detraction were most busy in opposition to Finney's influence, he began the introductory devotional services of the hour with nothing uncommon in his manner and words, but "soon the great deep of his heart was broken up, and he poured out a mighty stream of supplication for the class, for his former co-laborers, for those whom he had won to Christ, for the ministry, for the church bought with Jesus' blood, and for a lost world. Sometimes he seemed to be leading us; again he seemed to be alone with God. . . . We remained on our knees a whole hour, and then rose and went silently to our rooms." [1]

But in Oberlin Finney was still preëminently a preacher rather than a teacher, and, indeed, no small part of his teaching was done in the pulpit. From the beginning, it was the custom at Oberlin to have a sermon on Thursday afternoon

[1] Rev. Leonard S. Parker in *Reminiscences of Rev. C. G. Finney*, p. 48.

in addition to those upon the Sabbath. This custom was maintained as long as Finney was living. He was ordinarily the preacher, and his preaching was always more or less didactic. It was in his sermons upon the Sabbath, and upon Thursday afternoons, that one would hear his most complete and effective presentation of the great themes of the gospel, and his pupils ever prized these occasions as an indispensable supplement to their class-room exercises. It was through these means, in fact, that his influence became most extended among the vast body of pupils gathered at Oberlin. So prominent was the doctrinal element in his preaching, and so completely did he illustrate, in his own example, the definition sometimes given of true eloquence as "logic on fire," that scarcely any of the twenty thousand students who from time to time came statedly under his ministrations failed to get the salient points of his theology.

The importance of this feature of his work was always fully appreciated by Finney. The theological classes constituted small part of the attractions of the field for him; but the great concourse of students in the literary departments constantly furnished him fresh, popular audiences, which he could indoctrinate in the great principles of theology, so that the whole period of his life at Oberlin was permitted to be almost one prolonged revival effort. The attendance of students increased from two hundred at the beginning of his labors in 1835, to five hundred, in 1840, to more than

a thousand in 1850, and to an average of from twelve to fourteen hundred a little later. Mainly through Finney's reputation, also, the attendance had a cosmopolitan character unexcelled at any other school. As an illustration of this, it is on record that, while waiting in London in 1839 to set out upon his first missionary appointment, Livingstone forwarded his first quarter's salary to a younger brother in Scotland, urging him to take the money and go to Oberlin for an education.[1] The advice was followed, and his brother graduated at Oberlin in 1845.

The church and congregation increased to such a degree that in 1859 it was necessary, from mere lack of room, to form a second church. In 1845, a commodious church building had been erected, after the plan of the original Broadway Tabernacle, seating fifteen hundred. From that time on to the period just mentioned, it was the only church in the place, and the house was uniformly packed with eager listeners. Its membership had then reached about twelve hundred. To a remarkable extent, the church and community were kept united under Finney's preaching, and no serious divisions ever arose. For many years there was no lawyer in the place. Practically all the questions involving legal rights were settled by the pastor. Nearly all the people were church-members, and when there was a quarrel he always advised the parties to come to him, and tell their grounds of

[1] Blaikie's *Personal Life of David Livingstone*, p. 104.

complaint, before either taking them to the church or going into court. This was of course a purely voluntary matter; but such was the confidence in him, and so judicious was his advice, that every case of variance for many years was settled in this informal manner. Finney would hear the respective stories of the aggrieved parties alone, and then, after questioning and cross-questioning them, would be able to give them advice which, from his legal knowledge and great practical sense, was sure to carry conviction by the very weight of the reason there was in it.

An account of Finney's theological system, and of the theological controversies in which he was engaged, will be given in a separate chapter. But it is in place here to speak of the channels through which the centres of public thought outside of Oberlin were reached. Finney came to Oberlin in the prime of life; and though he had been preaching but twelve years, so remarkable had been his career that many thousands of the most active members of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches in New York and New England had been converted under his ministry. Naturally, these now looked to Oberlin for further instruction and guidance. It was this class that rallied to the support of the "New York Evangelist" when it published Finney's revival lectures in 1834, and later his sermons preached in the Broadway Tabernacle to professing Christians. It was the same body of persons, also, that gave such

wide circulation to various sermons published earlier, first in pamphlet form and afterwards in a collection entitled "Sermons upon Important Subjects," a third edition appearing in 1836.

But as his system of theology took on more and more definite shape in connection with his class instruction, it was deemed best to establish a paper at Oberlin through which he could more directly and regularly reach the public interested in him and in his views. For this purpose, therefore, a bi-weekly periodical, entitled the "Oberlin Evangelist," was established at the beginning of 1839, and was maintained for the next twenty-four years. This was strictly a religious paper, and its leading feature during nearly all that period was a sermon or lecture by Mr. Finney. Usually, in addition to this, there was a letter or communication from him, discussing at length some other practical or doctrinal themes. Nearly everything afterwards published in book form appeared first in this paper. There was also much besides which has never been republished. As one turns over the pages of this unpretentious periodical, he is astonished at the amount and the high character of the communications. The circulation of the paper at once reached the number of five thousand, which for that period was large, and its influence in extending a knowledge of his views cannot be overestimated.

Finney's call to Oberlin in 1835 was to the professorship of theology, and this was the chair

he held for the following sixteen years. But on the resignation of President Mahan in 1851, Finney was elected his successor, retiring from this position in 1866 only on account of advanced age. His election to the presidency, however, had little effect upon the range of duties to which he attended; for he never devoted much thought to the executive details of that office, but continued, as before, to give his energies to the theological lectures and to preaching. From this it is apparent that the success of the educational work at Oberlin was not solely dependent upon Finney, but was in large part due to a happy combination, in the faculty, of men diverse in character but harmonious in sentiment. A word is necessary, therefore, concerning these coadjutors.

Asa Mahan, who occupied the presidential chair for the first fifteen years, possessed many rare qualities for the position: he was a commanding preacher, a devoted student of philosophy, thoroughly in sympathy with the principles upon which Oberlin was founded, and a man of great independence of character and action.

John Morgan, who, as we have seen, was instructor at Lane Seminary, and incurred the censure of the trustees for his sympathy with the Lane Seminary protestants, was appointed professor of New Testament language and literature in 1835, and was a lifelong and most intimate associate of Finney, holding his chair until 1881. Morgan was a man of rare linguistic acquirements, and of a tem-

perament the direct opposite of Finney, and the two men constantly needed each other to supply their mutual deficiencies. Finney always deferred to Morgan for the settlement of critical points respecting biblical interpretation. The two men came to see the truth as with a single eye, and were so much together that they will always be associated in the minds of the students of that period. Finney came to feel almost lost if he was in the pulpit without Morgan to assist in some part of the service; and when Finney was unable to preach, there was no one else so well fitted to supply the place as Morgan.

Henry Cowles was another of Finney's lifelong associates at Oberlin, being at first professor of the Greek and Latin languages in 1835, then of ecclesiastical history in 1838, and of Old Testament language and literature in 1840, and finally lecturer on prophecy from 1869 to 1881. Cowles was one of the most frequent contributors to the "Oberlin Evangelist" from the beginning, and subsequently became its editor. A large part of the sermons and lectures of Finney published in the "Evangelist" were reported by Cowles, and later in life he published an important commentary on nearly the whole Bible.

James H. Fairchild was one of the first students at Oberlin. He joined the institution in 1834, graduating from the college in 1838 and from the theological seminary in 1841. In 1842, he became professor of Greek and Latin and teacher of He-

brew. In 1847, he was elected professor of mathematics and natural philosophy. In 1858, he succeeded Finney in the chair of theology, and in 1866, as president of the institution.

James Dascomb, professor of chemistry, botany, and physiology, was upon the ground when Finney came to Oberlin, having entered upon his duties in 1834. He was a graduate of the medical school of Dartmouth College. As an instructor, he was very methodical and thorough, and, while in full sympathy with the spirit that animated the founders of Oberlin, he was by nature cautious and conservative. He occupied his professorship for a period of forty-four years. His wife was also an important factor in securing the successful inauguration and maintenance of the system of the coeducation of the sexes, being for twenty years principal of the ladies' department; during the whole period of her husband's professorship, she was also an influential member of the Ladies' Board, a body upon which comes the responsibility of managing the discipline in the ladies' department.

These six, — Finney, Mahan, Morgan, Cowles, Fairchild, and Dascomb, — differing in personal qualifications as much as possible, but entirely harmonious in their aims, are the ones who have given such remarkable continuity and character to the educational movement at Oberlin. It is no derogation of Finney to say that his work at Oberlin would have been impossible without the coöperation of these men, not to mention various other

influences represented in the movement. But it is one of the highest excellences of the man that he could coöperate with such men. Marked as were the characteristics of his genius, and preëminent as were his abilities, he had a just sense of his own natural limitations, and could learn from the wisdom of others, and gracefully yield to the decision of the majority in minor matters.

When Finney had formulated his system of theology, his views upon the subject of entire sanctification became the object of sharp criticism, so sharp, indeed, that the phrase "Oberlin Perfectionist" became throughout the country almost as odious as "Oberlin Abolitionist." Deferring to a later chapter the exposition of Finney's views upon this subject, it is appropriate to remark here upon some of the incidental influences of the doctrine in shaping the course of things in the institution and community. The real gist of this doctrine consisted in magnifying at the same time the duty of entire consecration to God and the grace of Christ as an aid to the attainment of that standard of duty. It in no sense involved a letting down of the standard. It became, therefore, a characteristic of Finney's preaching to analyze human actions very minutely, and to apply his high conception of duty to every form of human activity.

As a natural result of this process, he ran the risk of making some erroneous applications of the law of duty. In the intensity of his convictions,

he was likely for the moment to attach inordinate importance to the subjects temporarily in mind. That he was fully aware of the hazard of this process is evident from some passages in his own sermons; for example, in an address given at the ordination of fourteen young men, August 22, 1842, he thus speaks of the dangers attending those who act as agents of benevolent societies: —

"But I have long been persuaded that it is a very serious thing for a minister to leave the direct work of preaching the whole gospel for the purpose of engaging in an agency that will confine him almost exclusively to some one department of religious truth. One of the evils of such a course is to beget in his mind a monstrous development of that particular truth. He soon loses the symmetry and proportion of a Christian man; becomes too much a man of one idea; loses sight, in a great measure, of other branches of reform; and is in danger of becoming censorious towards all others in whose minds there is not the same monstrous development of that particular truth. This is a dangerous state of mind, exceedingly injurious to his own piety and usefulness, and dangerous to the church of God. Such men are found not infrequently to be loudly denunciatory in respect to all Christians and ministers who are not swallowed up, as they are, in that particular branch of reform. They go up and down through the churches lecturing, making their particular topic a test question, and measuring everything and everybody by the

importance they attach to the particular branch of reform in which they are engaged. To them it appears that nobody else is doing any good, that nothing else is at the present time of much importance, and that little or nothing can be done for the salvation of the world until that particular branch of reform is perfected. These brethren seem not at all aware of the state of mind in which they are. They seem not to consider that they have so long dwelt upon the bearings and influence of one branch of reform, that it has in their mind grown out of all proportion as compared with other branches of Christian reform. I beseech you, brethren, take heed lest you come to be among the number of those of whom I am speaking.

"Do not understand me as speaking against agencies or agents, for no doubt these agencies need to be prosecuted. But I would earnestly warn you against being drawn away from the whole work of the ministry to engage in them, without a manifest call from God. And if you should be called to engage in them, I beseech and warn you to be on your guard against the tendencies of which I have been speaking. Without being at all aware of it, many of the lecturers of different societies have diffused a very unhappy spirit through the churches, and wherever they go they seem to plant a root of bitterness, and to get up a kind of faction, and to embitter the minds of certain classes of professors of religion against the church in general and the ministry, and, in short,

against all who have not a single eye to that particular department of reform." [1]

Finney and Tappan were agreed in their advocacy of total abstinence from spirituous liquors, and in their opposition to the use of tobacco. Of their positions upon these questions they never had occasion to repent; but on coming to Oberlin, Finney, in the line of portions of the original Oberlin Covenant, went to the extreme of opposing tea and coffee with somewhat the same vehemence that he opposed alcohol and tobacco. We find in the "New York Evangelist" for August 29, 1835, an account of a lecture upon temperance given by Finney at Oberlin, soon after his first arrival, in which the principles of total abstinence were applied to tea and coffee in connection with other stimulants; and it is said that, as a result, tea and coffee were swept from almost every table in the community. Occasionally, also, in his sermons and in his letters upon various subjects, we find the strongest language used in reprehension of these mild stimulants, and of over-eating in general. Yet it is just to Finney and his associates at Oberlin to say that they never enforced upon others any laws regulating diet, except in the matter of prohibiting to the students the use of alcohol and tobacco, — prohibitions which the authorities have seen no reason to remove in the advancing development of the school.

[1] *Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. iv. pp. 153, 154. See, also, vol. vii. p. 83.

It should also be borne in mind that that was a period when extravagant views upon the subject of dietetics prevailed almost everywhere. President Hitchcock, of Amherst College, published a book upon the subject, and went as far in formulating rules for eating and drinking as anybody at Oberlin ever thought of doing. Nor can it be said that any evil results to health followed from the abstemious diet during the early years of Oberlin. The health of the place was then remarkably good, and the intellectual work performed on the part of teachers and students was of a high order. During the first eight years, the death rate at Oberlin was only five to the thousand, though the people lived under all the disadvantages to health connected with a freshly cleared opening in a dense forest, in a level and rather poorly drained clay soil. Dr. Hodge and others, with some good reason, made merry of the strength with which Finney indorsed the dietetic views of Dr. Graham; but a little later Finney came to the conviction that he was in error upon these points, and had the frankness to say so in one of his published letters.[1]

The range of subjects to which Finney applied the great law of benevolence, and the minuteness of the application, was specially observable in his lectures on pastoral theology, which, because of the general desire to hear them, were usually given in one of the public halls. Though repeated periodi-

[1] *Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. vii. p. 68.

cally, they were never the same, being adapted in all cases to present emergencies. Many of these lectures were little else than the enforcement of the ordinary laws of good behavior and politeness, which, in the vivid light of his logic, seem to be essential constituents of the great law of benevolence. He did not deem it beneath his position to charge his pupils with the duty of keeping their nails clean and their clothes tidy; of sitting straight in their chairs, when in company, without tipping them back upon two legs; and so of the whole range of matters pertaining to good behavior. Fault was sometimes found with these instructions as being needless, because relating to things of which every one knows the propriety by nature; but Finney was probably wiser than his critics, and took the very best course to complete a much needed and neglected part of the education of no small portion of those who study for the ministry. He himself overlooked nothing because it was small, but was scrupulous in his own dress and behavior, and in everything showed the instincts and had the carriage of a gentleman. His public conduct in all these respects was itself an education to the school and the community.

Finney's doctrine of sanctification thus led him sooner or later to the discussion of almost every practical question, and to the consideration of almost every concrete form of sin. In one of his sermons on a seared conscience, which contained ninety-five subdivisions, describing the indications

of that deplorable condition of mind, he laments the little pains taken in theological seminaries to quicken the consciences and sanctify the hearts of the candidates for the ministry. "Why, beloved brethren," he exclaims, "unless there is more conscience in the Christian ministry, — a broader, deeper, more efficient and practical knowledge of the claims of the law of God, . . . a greater abhorrence of every form of sin, a more insupportable agony in view of its existence in every form and in every degree, — the world, and the church too, will sink down to hell under our administration." [1]

Finney would have the consciences of men so tender that they would feel an unutterable horror at the thought of committing the least sin against God or man. When properly educated, he avers, the conscience of the believer is so thoroughly awake "that the thought of sinning is to him as terrible as death, so that conscience will roll a wave of unutterable pain across his mind, and weigh him down with agony at every step he takes in sin." It will "agonize his soul, to a degree that will cause the perspiration to pour out from his body almost in streams, to fall into the slightest sin."

In a second sermon upon the same subject, we find eighty-four additional specifications of the ways in which the conscience becomes seared. Among the evidences mentioned is apathy concerning various questions of moral reform. Our consciences are seared, he goes on to say, "when

[1] *Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. iii. p. 74.

questions that concern our own well-being, or the well-being of others, are not regarded and treated as moral questions. For example, when the abolition of slavery, temperance, moral reform, politics, business principles, physiological and dietetic reform, — when these, I say, are not treated as moral questions, and as imposing moral obligation, the conscience must be in a seared state." Again, we find him saying, "When you can trifle with your health; go out in the snow or wet with thin shoes and hose, or in any way inappropriately clothed, unless you are under the necessity of doing so, — your conscience must be seared as with a hot iron. When you can neglect to ventilate your room, see that you have not too little or too much fire, — in short, when you can in any way trifle with your health, that precious gift of God, without conviction of guilt, — your conscience is alarmingly seared." [1]

He did not neglect to read his people a homily in this connection upon the sin of habitually borrowing tools. We quote the paragraph at length, as a characteristic specimen of his method of treating concrete sins: —

"When you can be in the habit of borrowing and using your neighbor's tools, without perceiving and feeling the injurious tendency of such conduct, and without realizing the pernicious principle upon which such a practice turns, it is because you have a seared conscience. Many persons act as if they

[1] *Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. iii. p. 65.

supposed that conscience had to do with but one side of this question, — that it is the lender exclusively, and not the borrower, who is to look to his conscience, and see that he does not violate the principles of benevolence. But let us look at the principle contained in this. If you borrow *money* of a man, you expect to pay him interest, or at least to restore the same amount you borrow; but if you borrow a man's coat or tools, that are injured by using, it is the lender and not the borrower that has to pay the interest, and often a very high rate of interest, too. Many a man has lost his tools, and paid at the rate of twenty-five per cent. for the privilege of lending them. Now suppose a man has a hundred dollars in money. Money is scarce, and a hundred men desire to borrow it, every one in his turn. And now suppose each one should wear a dollar out of it. The man's hundred dollars are soon used up. But suppose a man should come to you and ask you to lend him money, and insist upon it that you should pay him interest, instead of his paying you interest, and you should say, 'Why, I never heard of such a request! Do you ask me to lend you money and pay you interest besides?' Now any man would be ashamed, and would have reason to be ashamed, to make such a request; and his naked selfishness would in such a case be most manifest to every one. And who would think of accusing the lender of selfishness, in such a case, if he should refuse to let his money go for nothing, pay interest besides,

and finally take the trouble to go after it? And yet this involves precisely the same principle upon which many persons conduct, in the neighborhoods where they live, in continually borrowing and using up their neighbors' tools, and perhaps compelling them to go after them, and that, too, without compunction or remorse. Now, so far are they from feeling compunction or remorse, and perceiving that they are actuated by the most unpardonable selfishness, that they would complain, and suppose themselves to have a right to complain, of the selfishness of a neighbor who should refuse to indulge them in acting upon such principles.

"By this I do not mean to say or to intimate that it is not proper and a duty, in certain cases, for neighbors to borrow and use each other's tools. But this I do say, that the practice *as practiced* is unjustifiable. Borrowing should not be resorted to, except in cases where a man might, without any cause for blushing, ask a man to lend him money, not only without interest, but also ask him to pay interest." [1]

With their opposition to slavery Tappan and Finney of course included opposition to caste, though, so far as the colored race was concerned, this by no means included amalgamation. During the riots in New York city in July, 1834, Arthur Tappan had deemed it necessary to post a handbill

[1] *Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. iii. pp. 65, 66. For the immediate occasion of this exhortation, see p. 272, in the chapter on Personal Characteristics.

in different parts of the city, publishing in behalf of the Anti-slavery Society the following declaration, signed by himself and John Rankin: —

"1. We entirely disclaim any desire to promote or encourage intermarriages between white and colored persons.

"2. We disclaim, and utterly disapprove, the language of a handbill recently circulated in this city, the tendency of which is thought to be to excite resistance to the laws. Our principle is, that even hard laws are to be submitted to by all men, until they can by peaceable means be altered.

"3. We disclaim, as we have already done, any intention to dissolve the Union, or to violate the Constitution and laws of the country; or to ask of Congress any act transcending their constitutional powers, which the abolition of slavery by Congress, in any State, would plainly do." [1]

The same principle which opposed the feeling of caste led the founders of Oberlin also to throw the door open to young women desiring a college education, and from the first they were admitted to the college classes and granted the college degrees. The first women to receive the degree of Bachelor of Arts were members of the college class of 1841. Being the only school where this privilege was allowed, Oberlin drew to itself in its early days a remarkable company of high-minded, independent, intellectual, and earnest young women, whose good behavior and vigorous application at once made

[1] *The Life of Arthur Tappan*, pp. 215, 216.

co-education not only a thing to be tolerated, but a great and manifest success. Yet it is extremely doubtful if at that time it could have been successful except in the high moral and religious atmosphere that was secured throughout the community by Finney's presence and preaching. It was largely through Finney's influence, also, that Oberlin was prevented from running off into the general vagaries of a woman's rights movement.

From this summary of facts it becomes evident that, when the crisis came, it was not by accident that Oberlin went with the American and Foreign Anti-slavery Society under the lead of Arthur Tappan, rather than with the American Anti-slavery Society under the lead of Garrison.

It is easy to criticise a man of such strong and positive characteristics as Finney possessed; his very greatness exposes him to misunderstanding by those who take only a partial view of his work. One can readily collect from his numerous writings an indefinite number of statements which, by themselves, seem to be absurd, and, when compared with each other, contradictory. But when these are properly considered in connection with the man's own marvelous personality, both the absurdity and the contradiction will usually disappear, and nearly everything which he said or did will be found to represent important aspects of the truth, and to have been capable of being understood at the time. The very fact that he labored so long and so harmoniously with his associates at

Oberlin is itself an answer to much of the criticism which has been passed upon him, and shows that he had great breadth of mind, and a delicate appreciation of the work performed by other men whose spheres differed from his own, and, finally, that devotion to Christ was the paramount motive of his life.

CHAPTER VII.

THE THEOLOGIAN AND PHILOSOPHER.

Early Theological Predilections.

According to the ordinary course of things, it would seem in the highest degree preposterous for a man with Finney's experience previous to 1835 to set about the task of restating the theology of the church, and of reconstructing its underlying philosophy. For, as already stated, the first Bible he owned was purchased as a law-book when he was nearly thirty years old; while his conversion was of such an extraordinary character as almost of necessity to thrust him into the work of preaching without preliminary study. But it should be remembered that his knowledge of practical affairs and his legal training, combined with the deep experience of the gospel in connection with his conversion, made him a most apt student of the Scriptures; and it is everywhere evident in his writings that he had studied the Bible faithfully, and had obtained a thorough knowledge of its teachings. The illumination of the Spirit which he sought upon his knees was connected with the illumination reflected to his eyes from the book always open before him. Moreover, his study of the Scriptures was for the practical purposes of the hour,

that he might meet the wants of the hungry souls to whom from the first he was called upon to minister. In his pastor and first instructor, Mr. Gale, also, he was associated with a man of no inferior quality, whose influence was probably greater upon his mind than he ever realized.

On coming to labor in the vicinity of Rome and Utica, in the second year of his ministry, Finney was brought into contact with ministers of New England training, in whose minds the theology of Edwards and his successors was the dominating influence. It was in the house of Rev. Dr. Aiken, of Utica, that he first read Edwards "On Revivals," as well as other volumes by the same writer. Of these he "often spoke with rapture," according to Dr. Aiken,[1] who adds that Edwards "On Revivals" and Edwards "On the Affections" were more read by his own family than any other book except the Bible. Dr. Aiken thinks these books had a perceptible influence on Finney in toning down the original harshness of his expressions in preaching. It was about this time that Finney preached in Utica his celebrated sermon, above referred to, upon the text, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" And this sermon certainly shows many indubitable marks of Edwards's influence.

Upon going from Utica to Troy, in the winter of 1827, Finney became acquainted with Rev. N.

[1] See letter of Rev. S. C. Aiken in *Autobiography of Lyman Beecher*, vol. ii. p. 91.

S. S. Beman, whose influence, as already remarked, was making itself powerfully felt in the liberalizing movement which ended in the disruption of the Presbyterian Church ten years later. It is instructive to notice that Beman's published opinions on the atonement coincided closely with those which Finney himself subsequently wrought out.

When, a little later, Finney went to New York, and came in contact with the Tappans, he was brought into the circle of influences then radiating from Dr. Taylor, of New Haven, who was then the great advocate of the self-determining power of the human will. Yale Divinity School was established in 1822. While gathering funds for this, Beecher and Taylor made the house of Arthur Tappan their headquarters when in New York. Just how much association Finney had with Taylor cannot now be directly ascertained; but it is related [1] by the late Rev. George Clark that, previous to 1836, he was present at New Haven at an interview between Finney and Taylor, and listened with rapt attention to these two as they discussed great theological questions.

Finney's first labors in Boston also brought him into close contact with the theological speculations of the New England divines. His sermon in that city in 1831, upon the duty of sinners to change their own hearts, provoked most lively discussion. Rev. Asa Rand took notes, and severely criticised it in "The Volunteer," a paper started in Boston,

[1] *Reminiscences of Rev. Charles G. Finney*, p. 49.

and edited by him, for the express purpose of counteracting the new measures coming into use for the promotion of revivals. His strictures were soon afterwards enlarged, and published in a pamphlet, which called out answers from various quarters; these, in turn, led to a rejoinder in another pamphlet by Rand. The most important publication which appeared in defense of Finney's views was an anonymous pamphlet attributed afterwards to Rev. Dr. Wisner, pastor of the Old South Church, Boston. The two theological parties then dividing New England were respectively called "Tasters" and "Exercise Men." The Tasters were best represented by Asa Burton, of Thetford, Vt., who in his quiet parish had trained a large number of ministers, and by his writings had profoundly affected the thought of his time. His views were essentially those of the Old School Calvinists, since he maintained that there must be a radical change in the tastes of the soul before it could choose holiness. In this view, regeneration is regarded not as coetaneous with conversion, but as preceding it. As before intimated, the exhortation to sinners naturally connected with this belief is, not that they should repent, but that they should read the Bible, attend the means of grace, and wait upon the Lord till He should change their affections and "give them a relish" for holiness.

The Exercise scheme was that advocated by Nathaniel Emmons, also a country pastor, in whose house a still larger number of ministers had been

trained. According to this, regeneration and conversion are coetaneous, and the sinner is called upon, in view of the light he has, to exercise his native powers in repentance and faith. In the anonymous pamphlet just referred to, it was shown that Finney's teaching upon this point was closely allied to that of Emmons, and much learning was displayed in proving, also, that these views had always been prevalent in the church, and had always been recognized as orthodox.

Thus, before coming to Oberlin, Finney was thoroughly identified with the New School Calvinism of the times. On entering his new field, and setting about the task of systematizing his belief so as to impart it to his pupils, he found himself still further aided in the formulation of the New School position, both by his associate teachers and by his pupils. Professors John and Henry Cowles were fresh from the classes of N. W. Taylor at New Haven; while Professor Morgan, during his college course and in connection with Mark Hopkins, had sat in the classes and under preaching of President Griffin, of Williams C and, later, had come under the private ins of pastors in New York city and of Be Lane Seminary, and had acquired full of the New School position. President an Andover graduate. The students, no means deficient in theological id lections, but were all of them yo markable independence of thoug

to know the reason of the faith they were to preach. The main parts of the system wrought out by Finney under these influences we will now detail.

Views of Inspiration.

At the close of his first five years at Oberlin, Finney printed for class use an important volume, of two hundred and forty-eight octavo pages, containing the skeletons of his theological lectures as then elaborated. These cover the subjects of natural theology; the authority of the Bible, and its teaching concerning the natural and moral attributes of God; the nature of Christ and of the Holy Spirit; the foundation of moral obligation; the government of God; the sanctions of law; and the atonement. In this volume there was not much to which any of the New School Calvinists of that time could object. The introductory lectures upon "The Intuitions of the Reason" and upon "The Nature of Evidence" show rare skill in penetrating the central points of the themes under discussion, are worthy of the closest study. The lectures "The Existence of God" and upon "Various of Atheism" are also, even in this sketchy , of the very highest value; as are the upon "The Divine Authority of the doctrine which he defends in the most ng manner.

not often write book reviews; but rance, a year or two later, of a book wide circulation, and which con-

tained, as he believed, erroneous views concerning inspiration, he wrote a letter to the "Oberlin Evangelist," from which the following quotation is made, principally to show the quickness of his mind in perceiving the questions at issue in modern discussions upon the subject: —

"The ground taken by the writer is that the historical parts, especially, of the New Testament are not inspired, not even with the inspiration of such a degree of divine superintendence as to exclude error and contradiction from them. He takes the ground that there are palpable inconsistencies and flat contradictions between the writers of the Gospels, and points out several instances, it appears to me, very much with the art and spirit of infidelity, which he affirms to be irreconcilable contradictions. The ground taken by him is that the *doctrinal* parts of the New Testament are inspired, but that the *historical* parts, or the mere narrative, are uninspired.

"Who will not see at first blush that, if the writers were mistaken in recording the acts of Christ, there is equal reason to believe they were mistaken in recording the doctrines of Christ? Who does not know that the record of the doctrines preached by Christ is mere narrative and history, just as much as the journeyings, conversations, and acts of Christ? To say that the narrative of the gospel is uninspired with the inspiration of superintendence is the same thing as to say that the whole gospel is uninspired. For what are

the Gospels but narratives or histories of Christ's birth, life, preaching, conversations, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension, etc.? Now, what an inadmissible distinction is attempted when it is affirmed that the *didactic* or *doctrinal* portions of the gospel are inspired, while the *narrative* is uninspired? Only convince the world and the church that the narrative of the gospel is uninspired, — that there are irreconcilable contradictions between the writers, — and who will or who can consistently believe that they may not have committed errors in stating the *doctrines* of the gospel?

"The cases brought forward by this writer, supposed by him to be irreconcilable contradictions, are specimens of just that class of *apparent* discrepancies which forbid the idea of collusion among the witnesses. When such apparent discrepancies as these exist among witnesses in courts of justice, and it is found, on a thorough examination, that they can be reconciled with each other, such apparent discrepancies are considered as greatly corroborative of the truth, and add much to the credibility of the witnesses, upon the ground that they forbid the supposition of collusion among them. Now nothing is to be regarded as a contradiction except that which cannot by any possibility be reconciled. And there is no serious difficulty, in any of the cases adduced by the writer, in showing that the account of each of the evangelists may be strictly true, one omitting some circumstances mentioned by others. . . .

"It is amazing that the writer of that article should not have ingenuity enough, if he had never seen the subject examined, to discover some way in which those writers could be easily enough reconciled with each other, and their apparent discrepancies satisfactorily explained. In all such cases we are bound to show only that they may be consistent with each other." [1]

To such an extent did Finney rely upon the direct illumination of the Spirit in securing conversion and sanctification, that it is important to notice, as in this extract, how firmly he held to the plenary inspiration and the absolute authority of the Bible; and it is interesting and instructive also to observe how his legal training led him to formulate the proof of inspiration in accordance with the strictest principles of inductive reasoning. In his lectures, he goes over the whole ground in the broadest and most comprehensive manner. The doctrine, he says, does not imply that the writers received everything they recorded by direct revelation, nor that they were passive instruments, nor that their own individuality of style should be destroyed, nor that they should record only circumstances of great importance, nor that every part of the Bible is equally intelligible to all persons in all ages and places, nor that the writers themselves always fully understood what they wrote, nor that different writers should notice the same particulars in recording the same transactions. It is only ne-

[1] *Oberlin Evangelist*, June 23, 1841, pp. 100, 101.

cessary that they have substantial agreement without absolute contradiction; that they wrote nothing which, when properly interpreted, is false; and that by divine illumination and guidance they communicated authoritatively the mind and will of God.

That the Bible is so inspired he proves, not by a bare appeal to tradition, nor by an appeal to the miraculous powers of the writers, nor by the mere assertion of the writers themselves, unless they were endued with miraculous powers, nor by the elevated style of the writing alone, nor by the sublimity of the doctrines, nor by arguments independent of the style and doctrines; but, assuming the authenticity, genuineness, and credibility of the books to have been proved, he argues that inspiration follows from the facts that Christ promised his apostles the gift both of miracles and of inspiration, that He actually gave them miraculous power, that some of them positively affirmed their inspiration, and that their style, their doctrines, and their freedom from known error confirm these claims. In the treatment of proof-texts substantiating these points, nothing seems to be wanting, and the omission in the positive argument of proper reference to tradition is supplied in the answer he gives to objections.

For example, to the objection that Mark and Luke were not apostles, and therefore that the promises of inspiration and miraculous power did not extend to them, he replies that miraculous power was certainly possessed by many of the early

disciples besides the apostles, and so by inference was doubtless the gift of inspiration; that Mark and Luke evidently wrote under the eye of apostles; and, finally, that if the apostles had not approved and confirmed these Gospels, they could not have been so universally received by the church, from the very first, as of divine authority.

To the objection that Paul in some instances seems to declare that he was not inspired, as in 1 Cor. vii. 10, 12, 25, 40, and in 2 Cor. viii. 8, 10, 11, 17, he replies, first, that "if Paul really intends to notify his readers that in these instances he did not write under the influence of divine inspiration, it greatly confirms the fact of his actual inspiration in all other cases, for why should he be so careful in these particular instances to guard his readers against the supposition that he spoke by divine authority if in other cases he did not in fact do so? But, second, Paul might, and probably did, mean nothing more in these instances than that the Lord had given no express command in respect to these particulars, as no universal rule in relation to such matters could be adopted in the then circumstances of the church, and that he therefore, as an inspired apostle, did not mean to give a command in the name of the Lord, but simply give his inspired advice as one who had the Spirit of the Lord."

As to the objection drawn from 2 Cor. xi. 17, where Paul says that he speaks, "not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly," Finney remarks that "the apostle seems here to have meant that

he felt embarrassed by the circumstances under which they had placed him, and was constrained therefore to speak, not after the example of the Lord in respect to speaking in his own defense, but was obliged to speak as it were foolishly, as if he were a confident boaster. This does not imply that he does not consider himself inspired, but that his inspiration made it necessary, under the circumstances, for him to say what might appear immodest, and as inconsistent with Christian humility."

He concludes his discussion of the subject by remarking that "the question of the inspiration of the Bible is one of the highest importance to the church and the world, and that those who have called in question the plenary inspiration of the Bible have, sooner or later, frittered away nearly all that is essential to the Christian religion." From this it appears that he was as far as possible from being open to the charge sometimes urged against him of disregarding the Bible in the formulation of his theological system. Whatever tenets of theology he held, he certainly suppposed he was justified in holding them by a proper interpretation of the Scripture, and at every point he appealed to the Scripture for confirmation of the positions taken.

Reason and Revelation.

Nevertheless, Finney maintained with great strenuousness that the correspondences between the

Bible and the intimations and teachings of man's moral nature as revealed in consciousness were so minute and extensive as to furnish, in preaching, an unimpeachable working basis for securing belief in the gospel, and for exhortation to the higher duties of the Christian religion. The skill and power with which he handled this subject appears to advantage in a sermon preached, in 1854, upon "The Inner and Outer Revelation," from 2 Cor. iv. 2. After drawing out in some detail the fundamental affirmations of our moral nature concerning the existence and the law of God, and concerning our own helplessness under the condemnation of a broken law, he goes on to show that the provisions of grace are so fully and beautifully correlated to our wants and necessities as sinners, that we cannot help regarding the Bible as coming from the same Being who has created our moral nature and revealed himself in it.

"Having the first revelation," he goes on to say, "to reject the second is most absurd. The second is to a great extent a reaffirmation of the first, with various important additions of a supplementary sort, *e. g.* the atonement, and hence the possibility of pardon; the gift and work of the Spirit, and hence the analogous possibility of being saved from sinning."

In Finney's treatment of this subject, as the previous quotation shows, he on the one hand avoided the mystical vagueness of those who unduly rely for light upon the so-called "Christian conscious-

ness," and, on the other, stood far aloof from the cold agnosticism of those who unduly rely upon the unaided powers of the human reason. While always and everywhere acknowledging the authority of Scripture, at the same time he was confident that a popular audience could be made to see the main grounds on which the reason is led to accept its doctrines as authoritative. Recognizing, as he did, that few persons are able to give independent study to the historical argument in support of the Bible, he maintained that there is a shorter course which is equally trustworthy, and which fully justifies the popular use of the Bible among Protestant communities. "It is," he says, "a simple problem: given, a soul guilty, condemned, and undone; required, some adequate relief. The gospel solves the problem. . . . It answers every condition perfectly; it must therefore come from God; it is, at least, our highest wisdom to accept it." In expanding this thought, he contends that the written revelation is so perfectly correlated to the affirmation of man's moral nature concerning law, God, obligation, guilt, and ruin, that both must have had the same originator. Only the Creator of the human heart could have made such adequate provision for its wants as is found in the Scriptures. "In the Bible," he says, "we have a system of duty and salvation of such sort that it interlocks itself inseparably with truth intuitive to man, and manifestly fills out a complement of moral instructions and agencies in perfect adap-

tation to both man and his Maker." In the Bible we have a key that threads the countless wards of a most complicated lock. The Bible and the human heart must therefore have come from the same author; the one was made to fit the other. "You cannot grant to man an origin from God but you must grant the same origin to the Bible. . . . The reason, therefore, why the masses receive the Bible is, not that they are credulous, and hence swallow down absurdities with ease, but the reason is, that it commends itself so irresistibly to each man's own nature and to his deep and resistless conviction, he is shut up to receive it; he must do violence to his inner convictions if he reject it. Man's whole nature cries out, 'This is just what I need.'"

But with Finney this did not end in mere sentimentalism. For, according to him, one need of the human heart is of such a manifestation of God's justice as is made either in the punishment of the incorrigibly wicked, or, if their just punishment is remitted, in such remedial provisions as are found in the atonement.

In the sermon referred to, the principle is illustrated by a characteristic account of his dealing with a young lady who came to him in great spiritual darkness, and who was unable to believe that God's promised mercy comprehended her own case. She freely admitted her guilt; but, as she had not been brought to have unquestioned faith in the Bible, she despaired of mercy. At this point, Fin-

ney unfolded before her mind the facts recorded in the Bible respecting what God had done to alleviate the consequences of sin, and asked if this was not just such a manifestation of God as her soul needed and craved. She assented that it was, but pronounced it incredible that God should have done so much for his sinning creatures. It was too good to be true. Still she gave intellectual assent to the statement that God is infinitely good. At this crisis in her experience, Finney solemnly called upon her to give God credit for sincerity, and believe the word which He had pledged concerning the forgiveness of sin. To this she responded, "I do believe," and burst into loud weeping as a result of the joy accompanying her belief. Upon relating this, Finney exclaims, "What a scene, — to see a skeptic beginning to give her God credit for love and truth!" [1] Thus it was that Finney ever looked upon faith as an act, as well as an intellectual state. When the evidence was brought before the mind, he assumed that there must be a moral delinquency if one failed to take the proper action in view of it. His skill as a preacher consisted not only in unfolding the evidence, but in narrowing the sphere of immediate activity down to so clear a point that conviction of immediate duty could not be resisted. He called for no action that was not at the time demanded by the reason of the case as apprehended by his hearers.

[1] *Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. xvi. p. 26.

Natural Theology.

All the chapters upon the attributes of God, in Finney's preliminary volume, display to good advantage the metaphysical cast of his mind, and the strong grasp which he had of the fundamental questions in philosophy. Some further attention to these is necessary, in order to understand the ampler discussions concerning the controverted theological doctrines found in his later works.

Finney's hold upon the doctrine of the personality of God is strong, and his argument in proof of the existence of such a personality as expressed in these "Skeletons," though brief, is most cogent. First and foremost of these proofs is the existence and demand of our moral nature. Man is conscious of having moral character, and has a sense of being praiseworthy or blameworthy for his conduct, that is, he has a moral constitution which intuitively imposes upon him a moral law. The possession by a finite being of such a constitution and moral law irresistibly reveals a Creator who is himself a moral being and a lawgiver. It was upon the argument from these common convictions of men with reference to the divine existence, traceable to the existence of a moral law within them, that Finney chiefly relied for his proof of God's personality; and he assumed that the elements of this argument were present in the human mind from the very first, previous to any theoretical or formal statement. So cogent is the argu-

ment, he avers, that it "always has insured and always will insure the conviction of the great mass of men." In perusing his sermons, one constantly encounters this line of reasoning, and the success of his preaching is largely attributable to his skill in securing the assent of his hearers to his fundamental propositions, whether they believed the Bible or not. With inquirers who were desirous of drawing him out to the discussion of subsidiary questions of doubt and difficulty, his conversation was likely to be something as follows: "You have no time for such discussions now. Do you believe in a moral law?" The inquirer could but answer, "Yes." "Are you not conscious of having broken that law?" He was a very hardened man who would not also answer, "Yes." "When you are willing to pledge obedience to that law as far as you understand it, and to the God who made it, we can discuss these other difficulties, but not before."

But Finney recognized other considerations as confirmatory of the moral argument. He did not neglect to maintain that the existence of the physical universe indicates a First Cause, and that the adjustment of means to ends in that universe indicates a designing Cause, and that the general consent of mankind to the existence of a God is also confirmatory of the main argument. The metaphysical argument is drawn out by him to a considerable length, in which he concludes that "the existence of God is an inference or affirma-

tion of reason removed one step back from consciousness. I *think*, therefore I *am*. This is the first inference. I *am*, the universe *is*, therefore *God* is, is the second step or affirmation; and the second has the same certainty as the first, because it is based upon it. The existence of God, then, is as certain as my own existence and the existence of the universe. . . . The events of the universe *being admitted* or proved, it is impossible that God should not exist. The contrary supposition is an absurdity, as it assumes that the universe of events is uncaused, which is absurd. If by 'demonstration' we mean that which shows that the proposition in the question can but be true, the argument for the existence of God amounts to a demonstration."[1]

Some of Finney's answers to atheistic objections are specially worthy of note. For example, to the objection that a God of infinite goodness, knowledge, and power could not be the author of a universe involving so much evil both physical and moral as is known to exist, Finney answers, "Infinite goodness, knowledge, and power imply only that, if a universe were made, it would be the best that was naturally possible. This objection assumes that a better universe, upon the whole, was a natural possibility. It assumes that a universe of moral beings could, under a moral government administered in the wisest and best manner, be wholly restrained from sin; but this needs proof, and never can be proved."

[1] *Skeletons of a Course of Theological Lectures*, pp. 26, 27.

Falling back upon the doctrine of God's inscrutability, he argues that our failure to understand all the reasons for the present constitution of things is no bar to our *believing* that there may be ample reason for its existence, and proceeds not only to enforce the positive evidence of benevolent design, but to show that much which seems to us void of design, and especially of benevolent design, may, after all, be the product of the highest benevolence. The principal starting-point for all this line of reasoning is found in the emphasis which we are permitted to throw upon the possibilities of moral freedom and the nobility of moral discipline; still, with respect to the natural evils to which the animal creation is subjected, another line of argument has to be introduced, which, as we shall see a little later, Finney used with as much confidence and skill as is displayed by any modern naturalist.

In coming to the subject of the moral attributes of God, we approach questions upon which systems of theology begin to diverge from each other. Finney held, with Edwards, Samuel Hopkins, and N. W. Taylor, that benevolence, in the sense of willing the existence of the highest attainable absolute good, is the sum of all virtue in man, and of all the adorable moral attributes of God. Justice, mercy, truth, in all their manifestations, are but forms of benevolence, modified by the conditions under which the benevolent volition expresses itself. Regarding God, therefore, as a moral agent

possessing true freedom, as well as infinite knowledge, Finney finds in the very fact of his omniscience the ground of our confidence that God is benevolent. His whole treatment of this subject, even in the skeleton form, is most suggestive.

Finney argues the benevolence of God from his omniscience. For God cannot but know all the reasons in favor of benevolence, and cannot divert attention from them so as to obscure their character, and the reason affirms that God must always act under the full force of these motives to benevolence. As Finney clearly perceived, this statement of the case involves the Socratic idea that sin is a result of ignorance. The wicked man does evil because his attention is temporarily diverted from the strength of the motives urging him to benevolence. Nevertheless, without any attempt at explanation, Finney adhered to this ground of belief in God's unvarying benevolence, and, at the same time, rejected the necessitarian interpretation usually put upon the Socratic doctrine. He knew how to distinguish between a certainty and a necessity, — between the action of a moral motive and that of a locomotive.

An additional argument adduced by Finney for the divine benevolence is drawn from the fact that God has bestowed upon man a moral nature, and has thus made him capable of approving the good and condemning the evil. If God were not perfectly good, He would have every motive to abstain from bestowing upon the creature a capacity which

would compel him to abhor the conduct of his Creator.

With respect to the question of the Creator's benevolence towards the animal creation as considered by itself, Finney sides with naturalists like Wallace, rather than with sentimentalists like Arnold, John Stuart Mill, and Tennyson. Indeed, some of the passages in Wallace's recent chapters on the beneficence of nature[1] might well have been taken from these "Skeletons" of Finney, written fifty years before. So far from being depressed, as Tennyson was, by the wholesale destruction of many forms of life, Finney, like Wallace and others of his class, finds it possible to derive an actual argument for the divine benevolence from this quarter, concluding that not only is it no insurmountable objection, to either God's wisdom, or power, or benevolence, that —

> "From scarped cliff and quarried stone
> She cries, A thousand types are gone,"

but that these very facts afford proof of the Creator's benevolence.

"Animal life," he says, "while it lasts, is a real blessing, and probably in every instance more than compensates for the pain of death.

"From the very constitution of animals, they are necessarily mortal, and it is certainly good economy to make the carcass of one food for others, as in

[1] *Darwinism: An Exposition of the Theory of Natural Selection, with some of its Applications.* By Alfred Russell Wallace, LL. D., F. L. S., etc. London: Macmillan & Co. 1889. Pp. 36–40.

this case a greater number of animals can subsist upon the earth; *e. g.* let the earth be filled with vegetable-eating animals, as many as could subsist upon that species of diet; then let us suppose another class of animals to subsist upon the flesh of the vegetable-eating animals, and another class to subsist upon the milk both of the vegetable and flesh-eating animals: it is easy to see that in this way a greater amount of animal life, and consequently of bestial happiness, can be secured than would be otherwise possible. The fact that animals do so subsist is, therefore, a striking evidence of the economic benevolence of the Creator. Just so in the sea. One species of fish may live on certain marine substances; and when the number is so multiplied as that no more can be supplied with such kinds of aliment, other species may exist that will prey upon these, as is actually the fact, and thus a greater number of fishes may exist than were otherwise possible.

"It cannot be shown that the whole amount of animal happiness is not greater than if animals and fishes were not to prey upon one another." [1]

Theodicy.

So of the objection to God's benevolence drawn from the existence of pain in general, Finney affirms that it "cannot be shown that, in a world like this, sickness, pain, death, and other apparent ills are real evils. They certainly are often only

[1] *Skeletons*, etc., p. 81.

blessings in disguise. And it cannot be shown that they are not invariably so.

"With respect to the death of infants and of animals, their death may be mercifully ordered to prevent still greater calamities befalling them. And in the case of infants, there is no reason to doubt that their natural death is only the entrance upon eternal life." [1]

Nor does he shrink from facing the most appalling of all objections to the coexistence in God both of benevolence and almighty power, namely, the prevalence of sin in the universe. In maintaining the existence of these divine attributes in face of the moral evil which so abounds in the world, Finney falls back, with the New Haven theologians of his time, upon the manifest principle, that the best *possible* universe might not be the best *conceivable* universe. We can conceive that the universe would be actually better than it is if the moral beings created had uniformly used their moral powers aright; yet it might not in the nature of things be possible to bestow these high powers upon created beings, and then compel absolute obedience. It is sufficient to justify the ways of God in the creation and government of the universe to prove that the universe as it is, is better than no universe at all; or rather, it is incumbent upon those who deny or doubt either the benevolence or the power of God, to prove that the existence of the present universe is not a positive addition to the sum of well-being.

[1] *Skeletons*, etc., p. 82.

Upon this point a single paragraph gives the gist of Finney's views : —

" It cannot be shown that the present system, with all its natural and moral evils, does not, after all, result in a greater amount of virtue and happiness than any other system would or could have done. Had there been more temptation, it might have destroyed all virtue. Had there been less, virtue had certainly been less valuable, and final happiness less complete."

In this line of reasoning, Finney's training as a lawyer gave him marked advantage, and we consequently find him stating with rare clearness the questions to be proved, and pressing with skill the considerations underlying the legal maxim, that the defendant is to have the benefit of the doubt, and that in proportion to the established character of his reputation. It is enough, therefore, Finney maintains, to show that the existence of moral evil in the world " *may* be accounted for in consistency with the truth of all the evidence for the benevolence of God." There is so much clearly indicating the benevolence of God, that we may *believe* in his benevolence where we cannot *see* it.

Under Finney's view of benevolence, the justice, mercy, and truth of God will more naturally come up for treatment in connection with the subject of the atonement. We may also briefly pass over his treatment of the unity and triunity of God, upon which his views do not differ materially from the orthodox doctrine. We should note, however, that,

in proof of the Trinity, as well as of the twofold nature of Christ and of the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit, he depends almost wholly upon Scripture.

Controverted Points.

Respecting subjects of anthropology, Finney's views coincided, as has been previously remarked, with those maintained by the New School Calvinists. Upon the group of questions connected with this subject Finney published elaborately, first in the "Oberlin Evangelist" from 1839 on, and then in two volumes upon "Systematic Theology," filling twelve hundred octavo pages, published in Oberlin in 1846 and 1847. The topics embraced in these volumes are the atonement, moral and physical depravity, regeneration, philosophical theories, evidences of regeneration (vol. i.), ability (natural, moral, and gracious), repentance, impenitence, faith and unbelief, justification, sanctification, election, reprobation, divine purposes, divine sovereignty, and perseverance (vol. ii.).

These volumes were subjected to very searching criticism, especially on account of the fact that, since 1840, the views of Finney and Mahan upon the subject of sanctification, or Christian perfection, had been so much spoken against and misunderstood that, as already said, Oberlin Perfectionism became for a long time a by-word of reproach. Not only were ministers silenced for preaching it, but church members were excommunicated for holding

it. But at this there is little occasion for surprise when we consider the sensitiveness of the public mind at that time with respect to theological innovation, and the slowness of the human mind at all times in apprehending new theological movements; and we allude to the facts without any design of putting an uncharitable construction upon them.

The substance of the Oberlin doctrine of sanctification was presented by Finney in two sermons at the Broadway Tabernacle, New York, in the winter of 1836–37, while he was still pastor of the church, under the arrangement by which he divided his time between Oberlin and New York. These sermons were reported by Mr. Leavitt in the "New York Evangelist," and soon afterwards reprinted in the volume entitled "Lectures to Professing Christians," and were thus widely circulated. Published under these circumstances, they were not the subject of special criticism.

It appears that Finney's views on this question underwent a change soon after he came to Oberlin, partly in consequence of contact with the various influences which we have already related as centring here, but more especially from his own enlarged conceptions of the promises of Scripture. At the same time, his mind felt with increasing keenness the necessity of a higher state of consecration on the part of the church, if Christianity was ultimately to prevail in the world. In addition to these considerations, the philosophical views which Finney afterwards worked out, with reference to

the action of the will, materially modified the doctrine, and at the same time added to the difficulty which many had in apprehending its real merits.

When he came to Oberlin, where the great majority of those who listened to his stated preaching were already converted persons, his attention was naturally turned to the work of building up the character of both the colonists and the students in those respects which would make them most effective as Christian witnesses. Very soon, and in consequence of his preaching, a select number of his best pupils became profoundly agitated over the question, If we are perfectly consecrated in our conversion, why cannot we hope, through the grace of God, to attain an abiding state of consecration? To this proposition, when first presented, Finney replied, with his accustomed vigor, that it was entirely out of the question; that if they could find a man who was perfectly keeping the commands of God and living up to his light, he would creep on his hands and knees all the way to the Atlantic Ocean to see him. Nevertheless, he was soon persuaded that the promises of the Bible contemplated this state of abiding consecration on the part of believers, and that these promises were such that men might, through the abundant grace of God, aim at such a condition, with the rational hope of attaining it. In all this, however, there was no thought of imposing any yoke upon others to which he did not also himself submit.

In an early number of the "Oberlin Evangelist,"

Finney began a series of letters addressed "To the Young Christians who have been converted in the Great Revivals of the Past Few Years, scattered up and down the Land, wherever the Providence of God may have cast your lot." At the same time, his lectures and sermons were fully reported in the paper, and Professor Cowles was writing a series of articles upon "The Holiness of Christians in the Present Life." In the second of these letters, Finney referred to a garbled extract of one of his former lectures, in which he is said to have spoken disparagingly of his early converts, to the effect that their growth in grace had been so small, and their standard of piety so low, that, as a body, they were a disgrace to religion. But he called attention to the fact that, in the same connection, he had said they were real Christians, and were indeed the best Christians in the church. All that he had said was uttered from an overweening desire to win them away, if possible, from the last remains of sin, and in this he did not set himself up as in a class above them. But he says that when he came to labor as a settled pastor in New York, he found that he had been so long in pursuit of sinners with the law to convict them, and only enough of the gospel just to convert them, that his mind had, as it were, run down, and that those high and spiritual truths which are the food and life of the Christian soul had not that place in his own heart which is indispensable to the effectual exhibition of them to others. "I found," he says, "that I knew comparatively little

about Christ, and that a multitude of things were said about Him in the gospel of which I had no spiritual view, and of which I knew little or nothing.

"What I did know of Christ was almost exclusively as an atoning and justifying Saviour. But as a Jesus to save men from sin, or as a sanctifying Saviour, I knew very little about Him. This was made, by the Spirit of God, very clear to my mind. And it deeply convinced me that I must know more of the gospel in my own experience, and have more of Christ in my own heart, or I could never expect to benefit the church. In that state of mind, I used often to tell the Lord Jesus Christ that I was sensible that I knew very little about Him, and I besought Him to reveal himself to me, that I might be instrumental in revealing Him to others. I used especially to pray over particular passages, and classes of passages, in the gospel, that speak of Christ, that I might apprehend their *meaning*, and feel their *power* in my own heart. And I was often strongly convinced that I desired this for the great purpose of making Christ known to others.

"I will not enter into detail with regard to the way in which Christ led me. Suffice it to say, and alone to the honor of his grace do I say it, that He has taught me some things that I asked Him to show me. Since my own mind became impressed in the manner in which I have spoken, I have felt as strongly and unequivocally pressed by the Spirit of God to labor for the sanctification of the church

as I once did for the conversion of sinners. By multitudes of letters, and from various other sources of information, I have learned, to my great joy, that God has been and is awakening a spirit of inquiry on the subject of holiness throughout the church, both in this country and in Europe." [1]

Unfortunately, in his views upon this doctrine, Finney did not carry with him the leading New School Calvinists of the time, and, apparently to avoid the prejudice aroused against it, they felt themselves compelled to take special pains to clear their skirts of responsibility for the doctrine. Committees were therefore from time to time appointed by the presbyteries, synods, and other church judicatories to consider the subject, and they pretty generally made reports adverse to the truth and orthodoxy of the views. The criticism which Finney felt most keenly was that made by the Troy Presbytery in 1841, and which was signed and bore marks of having been written by his former friend and coadjutor, Dr. N. S. S. Beman. This manifesto of the Troy Presbytery closed with a resolution declaring the doctrine to be false in itself, calculated to engender self-righteousness, disorder, deception, censoriousness, and fanaticism, contrary to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and altogether such that it was the duty of ministers to preach against it, and expressed much regret and sorrow that the theological professors at Oberlin should have espoused the heresy.

[1] *Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. i. p. 25.

About the same time, also, Professor Woods, of Andover, published a courteous but very positive review in condemnation of it. Other utterances in condemnation are too numerous to mention, and the bitterness of the opposition is too painful to contemplate with pleasure. Faithful ministers were not only shut out from entering the pulpit, but were interrupted in the midst of useful work upon the frontier, and were so utterly proscribed that they and their families were left to suffer in penury and want. Even missionaries in distant foreign lands were dropped by the American Board, and left to seek support by their own labors or by special appeals, and Oberlin students were refused beneficiary aid by the American Education Society. The ostensible reason for this last effort was that the course of study in the college department was below the standard in classical attainments. It was clearly shown, however, that, if Hebrew was reckoned as equal to Latin, the Oberlin standard in college was scarcely at all below that at Yale.

The Old School Presbyterians were not slow to see their advantage. Upon the appearance of Finney's "Theology," Prof. Charles Hodge, in the "Biblical Repertory" of June, 1847, published a review of it which was characterized by much acuteness but more acerbity, in which he extolled to the highest degree Finney's logical power, but manifestly for the sake of forcing home upon the New School men the conviction that Finney's theology was a complete *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole

New School system, and that the only way of avoiding his heretical conclusions was by abandoning the fundamental principles of the whole New School party.

This attack of Hodge was followed in October of the same year by a pamphlet entitled "A Warning against Error," written by Dr. Duffield, a prominent New School pastor of Detroit, Mich., and formally approved by the Synod of Michigan, which endeavored to show that Finney's views were not the necessary outgrowth of the fundamental principles of the New School party.

To both these attacks Finney made extensive replies in the "Oberlin Quarterly Review," while the "Oberlin Evangelist," both before and after this time, frequently commented upon the "backward track" which the New School men were taking to avoid acceptance of the Oberlin views upon sanctification. It should be said, however, that the views of sanctification, as practically held at Oberlin, were maintained originally and chiefly on the ground of their biblical character; and that the three main advocates of the views, namely, Mahan, Finney, and Cowles, were by no means agreed in all their philosophical speculations upon the matter. As already intimated, Finney, in working out his system of theology, had adopted the Edwardean or Hopkinsian theory of virtue, namely, that the highest good of being in general is the foundation of obligation. With regard to the will, also, he had adopted the view of Emmons, that, at every

successive moment, it is wholly virtuous or wholly sinful, — a doctrine styled in Finney's "Theology" "the simplicity of moral action." The former of these views Mahan never adopted, and the latter Cowles was never known to approve.

What they were all agreed in, however, was the natural ability of the human will to keep the law of God, or, in other words, the equation between the extent of obligation and that of natural ability. All held, also, the certainty that without divine grace man would always fall short of meeting this obligation, and that therefore both regeneration and sanctification were dependent upon gracious influences freely bestowed upon believers, according to the promises of the Bible. The practical aim of Finney in all this discussion was to induce the church to strive after a higher standard of Christian life, and to attain a more joyful and satisfactory experience, than had characterized the older form of Calvinism. In this there is no doubt he was successful, and an examination of his system will reveal a solid basis both for the evangelical activity which he exhibited and urged, and for such readjustments of evangelical thought as are made necessary by the changing character of modern development. This will appear as we now proceed to pass under review the more peculiar portions of his system.

Ability and Obligation.

In his analysis of the human mind, Finney distinguishes between the *sense*, which receives im-

pressions from the outside world; the *understanding*, which takes up, classifies, and arranges the objects and truths of sensation; and the *will*, which, in presence of the motives presented by the sense and the reason, commits the life to an end which is good or bad. The idea of absolute or ultimate good is first given in the sensibility, for it is through this faculty that man first experiences happiness or satisfaction. Happiness, in the fullest and broadest sense of that word, is the only absolute or ultimate good. Other things which are called good are only relatively so, that is, they are good for something. Food is not good in itself, but only in its relation to sentient being. Food gives pleasure to the animal which appropriates it, and that pleasure is an absolute good. Food gives strength and pleasure to a man. So far as it gives pleasure, it accomplishes an absolute good, but the strength imparted is only another stage of relative good, which may be used for higher purposes, — to produce, for example, a piece of sculpture, a painting, a poem, or a song, which in turn are only still higher forms of *relative* good. If, now, there is a cultivated eye to perceive the beauties produced, a cultivated ear to appreciate the melody of the song, and a cultivated mind to be thrilled by the poetry, this satisfaction of the mind is an *ultimate* good. Thus, in ever-widening spheres, the *summum bonum* is, to the moral reason, indicated in the comprehensive phrase "the highest good of being," and this is

intuitively seen to be an object worthy in itself of supreme choice. This "highest good of being," or, as Finney was careful to say, "highest good of God and the universe," is the foundation of obligation. To choose the highest good of being is right and praiseworthy in itself. This is, indeed, the essence of all virtue. The character of a choice is not determined till we have found its attitude with reference to this comprehensive ultimate good. How, for example, should we determine the character of an industrious, frugal, and well-behaved young man whose conduct is under consideration? He is industrious, frugal, and well-behaved for the purpose of obtaining money. He desires money to get an education. He desires an education to get more money. He desires more money to found a college or a church. But still we have not arrived at the ultimate choice upon which the real character of the man depends. He may desire to found a college to perpetuate his fame, which may or may not be a virtuous choice. Or this may be the last step in a train of causes which he would set in motion to promote the glory of God and the good of the universe, when, and when only, it would be true virtue. Three brief statements of Finney cover the whole ground: "The well-being of God and the universe of sentient existences is intrinsically important or valuable, and all moral agents are under obligation to choose it for its own sake. . . . God's ultimate end in all He does or omits is the highest well-be-

ing of himself and the universe, and in all his acts and dispensations his ultimate object is the promotion of this end. . . . All obligation resolves itself into an obligation to choose the highest good of God and of being in general for its own sake, and to choose all the known conditions and means of this end for the sake of the end."

The theory of virtue with which this is most likely to be confounded is the form of utilitarianism advocated by Prof. N. W. Taylor, of New Haven. Like Finney, Taylor maintained that the only ultimate thing good in itself is mental satisfaction or happiness, but he does not distinguish with equal clearness between the absolute and the relative use of the word "good." For example, Taylor correctly says: "Were everything as it is, — were God and his vast creation as they are, with the single exception of all capacity of happiness and all possibility of such happiness, — all would be utterly worthless." But in the sentence before this, Taylor had confounded two uses of the word "good" between which Finney was always careful to distinguish. Taylor had said, "Nothing is good but happiness and the means of happiness," including the absence of misery and the means of its absence. This lack of discrimination between ultimate or absolute good and proximate or relative good necessarily led Taylor into a form of utilitarianism. Taylor's statement is, that "all the worth or value of man, or of any other moral being, consists in his capacity of happiness, and of

that self-active nature which qualifies him to produce happiness to other beings and to himself. All the worth or value, or goodness or excellence, which pertains to action on the part of a moral being, is its fitness or adaptation to produce the results. The best kind of action, therefore, on his part, is that which is exclusively and perfectly fitted to produce the highest happiness of others and his own highest happiness. This kind of action, in its relation to the happiness of others, and its relation at least in one respect to the happiness of the agent himself, is benevolence, or benevolent action. This kind of action is good, not simply as it is perfectly fitted to produce the highest happiness of all other beings, but also as, by being thus fitted to produce the highest happiness of all other beings, it is perfectly fitted to produce the highest happiness of the agent of which he is capable, from any object or end of action." [1]

Finney's criticism of Taylor's position would be, that he confounds the end with the means, and has failed to distinguish what the political economists would call "value in use" from "value in exchange." When Taylor says that all the goodness of an action pertains to its adaptation to produce results, an incongruous element is introduced into the discussion. Finney would say, with Kant, that good-willing is praiseworthy and excellent in itself, without reference to any actual tendency to promote the well-being which is the object of

[1] Taylor's *Moral Government*, vol. i. pp. 31, 32.

choice. It is "the value of the end, and not the tendency of the intention to secure the end, that constitutes the foundation of the obligation to intend."

But, on the other hand, Finney clearly enough maintains that the obligation to use any particular means to do good must be conditioned upon the supposed "tendency of those means to secure the end." But this is the obligation to put forth a proximate rather than an ultimate choice. Ultimate intention has no such condition.

"The perceived intrinsic value imposes obligation without any reference to the tendency of the intention."[1] This distinction between the conditions upon which the will is bound to make use of certain means adapted to promote the highest well-being, and the good of being itself, which is the ground of obligation to intend, must always be kept clearly in mind in interpreting Finney's system. The obligation to choose the ultimate end is intuitive and absolute, and is imposed upon the mind by the moral reason just so soon as the idea of absolute good is revealed to man by his sensibility. The obligation to use certain means arises only as the understanding, often slowly and hesitatingly, reveals their adaptation to the end. The choice of the good of being may be defined as that attitude of the soul in which it is committed to the use of every means for the promotion of the end which shall be brought to light. The soul

[1] Finney's *Theology* (London edition), pp. 52, 54.

that has made the highest good of being its ultimate choice *stands ready* to promote it by the use of all appropriate means.

Does the End sanctify the Means?

Finney's view that the only absolute rule of obligation is that man should choose the highest good of being, and be ready, with such knowledge and power as he has, to make use of all means tending to promote it, sounds, when baldly stated, like the jesuitical doctrine that the end sanctifies the means. Prof. Charles Hodge was not slow in perceiving this, and in his criticism of Finney's "Theology" made it one of the two main points of attack, alleging that Finney's theory had its natural outcome in the doctrine of the Jesuits, and therefore must be false. To this Finney replied at length in the "Oberlin Quarterly Review." [1]

Dr. Hodge had said that the only difference between Finney's view and that of the Jesuits is that Finney inserts the word "ultimate" before "intention," maintaining that "all other things are right or wrong as they proceed from a right or wrong ultimate intention." But, said Hodge, "we cannot see that this makes any real difference in the doctrine itself. Both parties (*i. e.* the Jesuits and Mr. Finney) agree that the intention must be right, and, if that is right, everything which proceeds from it is right. The former says that the honor and wel-

[1] See vol. iii. pp. 23–81, republished as an appendix in the English edition of his *Theology*.

fare of the church is the proper object of intention. Mr. Finney says the highest good of being is the only proper object. The latter, however, may include the former, and the Jesuit may well say that in intending the welfare of the church he intends the glory of God and the highest good of the universe. In any event, the whole poison of the doctrine lies in the principle common to both, namely, that whatever proceeds from a right intention is right. If this is so, then the end sanctifies the means, and it is right to do evil that good may come, which is Paul's *reductio ad absurdum*." [1]

To this charge Finney answered that the insertion of the word "ultimate" before "intention" in the jesuitical statement entirely transforms the doctrine, since the real error of the Jesuits consists in unduly exalting a subordinate end. The question whether it is right in all circumstances to defend the Catholic Church depends on the larger question whether that church is a necessary means of promoting the highest good of being in the universe. In order to settle this question, it is necessary to look beyond the subordinate end, and this the Jesuits declined to do. The ultimate choice of the good of being which Finney contemplates involves the choice of all the means which, according to the dictates of reason and revelation, are adapted to the securing of that end. "One cannot choose an end in obedience to God and reason, and then

[1] Finney's *Theology*, p. 927; *Princeton Review*, April, 1847, p. 259.

disobey and disregard both or either in the use of means to secure his end. This is impossible. If honest in his end, he will be and must be honest in the use of means. Benevolence consists in the choice of the highest good of universal being as an ultimate end, and implies the choice of every interest of every being, according to its perceived and relative value." [1]

Farther on, Finney shows that the substitution of other standards of virtue, in the place of the good of being, does not relieve one from the hazards of jesuitical casuistry. "Nothing," he says, "is gained by replying to the Jesuits by assuming that there are divers independent grounds of moral obligation, and consequently divers moral laws; for, if the supposition be admitted that there are, either these laws may come into conflict or they cannot. If they can, who will say that the law of benevolence shall yield to the law of right; or that it can be a duty to will abstract right as an end, rather than the highest well-being of God and the universe? But if these supposed moral laws cannot come into conflict, why then the Jesuit will of course reply that it is, and must be always, right to will the highest well-being or good of God and the universe, with the necessary conditions and means; and therefore the end, or the intention, must give character to and sanctify the means. Or, again, suppose that there be divers ultimate ends or grounds of moral obligation, he would tell you that,

[1] Finney's *Theology*, p. 927.

in the pursuit of any of these, the end or intention sanctifies the means; so that nothing is gained, so far as avoiding the perversion of the Jesuits is concerned, by assuming that there are divers grounds of moral obligation, and of course divers moral laws. And the same is true whether it be admitted or denied that these ends or laws come into conflict." [1]

Comprehensiveness of Love.

Dr. Hodge complained of Finney's theology that it was too comprehensive, and was a vain attempt "to squeeze all this [the Scripture idea of love] down, and wire-draw it through one pinhole. . . . We may admit," says Hodge, "that love is the fulfilling of the law, without being sophisticated into believing, or rather saying, that faith is love, justice is love, patience is love, humility love."

In reply, Finney had but to point to his ample treatment of this subject in his published volume, where it would seem that he had sufficiently guarded against any such misapprehension; for example, on pages 183–185 of his first Oberlin edition (211–213 of the later London edition), he had said: —

"All the moral attributes of God and of all holy beings are only attributes of benevolence. . . . God is love. This term expresses comprehensively God's whole moral character. . . . But from this comprehensive statement, accurate though it be, we are apt to receive very inadequate conceptions of

[1] Finney's *Theology*, p. 945.

what really belongs to or is implied in benevolence. To say that love is the fulfilling of the whole law; that benevolence is the whole of true religion; that the whole duty of man to God and his neighbor is expressed in one word, love, — these statements, though true, are so comprehensive as to need, with all minds, much amplification and explanation.

"The fact is, that many things are implied in love or benevolence. By this is intended that benevolence needs to be viewed under various aspects and in various relations, and its dispositions or willings considered in the various relations in which it is called to act. Benevolence is an ultimate intention, or the choice of an ultimate end. Now, if we suppose that this is all that is implied in benevolence, we shall egregiously err. Unless we inquire into the nature of the end which benevolence chooses, and the means by which it seeks to accomplish that end, we shall understand but little of the import of the word 'benevolence.' Benevolence has many attributes or characteristics. These must all harmonize in the selection of its end, and in its efforts to realize it. Wisdom, justice, mercy, truth, holiness, and many other attributes, as we shall see, are essential elements or attributes of benevolence."[1]

On recurring to the place referred to in Finney, one will find no less than sixty pages occupied with the discussion of the attributes of benevolence, and no less than thirty-seven attributes specified and

[1] Finney's *Theology*, p. 958.

defined. True benevolence is voluntary; is free; is intelligent; is in conformity with the perceived nature of things in its relation to the end chosen; is disinterested; is impartial; is universal in the objects of its embrace; is efficient and active; is penitent in view of sin; is trustful in presence of all the revelations of God's character; is complacent in view of all revealed virtue; is opposed to sin; is compassionate for the miserable; is inclined to the exercise of mercy where mercy is wise; is ready to execute justice where necessary for the public good; is veracious; is patient; is meek; is long-suffering; is humble; is self-denying; is condescending; is candid; is stable; is kind; is on occasions severe; is holy (that is, is inclined to emphasize the importance of conformity to the law); is modest; is sober; is sincere; is zealous for the truth; is single in its aim; is full of gratitude for favors received; is submissive to the dictates of wisdom; is disposed to bestow favors upon others; and finally is regardful of the principles of economy in all its subordinate manifestations.

The Simplicity of Moral Action.

In company with Dr. Emmons, Finney regarded the action of the will at each moment as necessarily altogether holy or altogether sinful. The will is like a railroad train: whatever movement it has must be in one of two directions. If it moves at all, it must be either forwards or backwards. The velocity and momentum may be of varying degrees,

proportionate to the greatness of the being who is acting and to the intensity of the light under which the choice is put forth. "The breast of every Christian," according to Emmons, "is a field of battle where sometimes benevolence and sometimes selfishness gains the victory."[1] "Sin and holiness are diametrically opposite affections, and cannot be united in one and the same volition."[2] This principle leads to the apparently absurd position that, if a person at a particular instant puts forth a praiseworthy choice, he is as good as he can be; and if he puts forth a blameworthy choice, he is as bad as he can be. This form of stating the conclusion led to the charge that, on Finney's theory, growth in holiness was impossible, and degeneracy of character out of the question. This, however, is a misdirected criticism, arising from amphibology in the terms employed. The phrase "good as one can be" may be used either in the present tense or in the future. By Finney it is used in the present, and refers merely to the character of an instantaneous choice under given conditions. At each successive moment of choice the conditions change, and so successive choices may be compared with each other as more or less intense.[3] Furthermore, in our general estimates of character, we attach great importance to the permanence of the choices involved. In both these respects, Finney was free

[1] *Works*, vol. iv. pp. 366–368.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. iii. p. 300.
[3] *Theology*, pp. 144, 287.

to maintain the possibility of improvement. Speaking of growth in grace, he says that "it consists in two things: first, in stability or permanency of holy ultimate intention; second, in intensity or strength. As knowledge increases, Christians will naturally grow in grace in both of these respects."[1]

The alternative theories concerning the will are reduced by Finney to five: First, "that selfishness and benevolence can coexist in the same mind," — a supposition which both Finney and Emmons declare to be as inconceivable as "that a volition to walk should be partly a desire to move, and partly a desire to stand still." Second, "that the same act or choice may have a complex character on account of complexity in the motives which induce it." But in the ultimate analysis this is the same as the first. Character is determined by a choice between motives. The right action of the will is a positive choice of the highest good of being. Refusal to put forth that choice is without excuse, and is sin. Third, "that an act or choice may be right in kind, but deficient in intensity or degree." To this, Finney replies: "If all the strength is not given, it must be because part of it is voluntarily withholden. That is, I choose the end, but not with all my strength; or I choose the end, but choose not to choose it with all my strength," either of which contradicts the demands of benevolence. A fourth supposition is, "that the will or heart may be right while the affections or emotions are wrong."

[1] *Theology*, p. 153.

But the affections and emotions do not constitute the essence of moral character. They may be signs of it. They may indicate what the character has been in the past, but in the ultimate analysis the real character is found in an act of the will. But it is, as Emmons pronounced it, both a groundless and a dangerous doctrine to suppose "that Christians may live days and months, and even years, in a dull, stupid, lifeless state, their principle of grace continuing, but not in proper sensible exercises." Men deceive themselves when they suppose that they are better than their exercises. Fifth, it is held by some "that there may be a ruling, latent, actually existing holy preference or intention coexisting with an opposing volition." To this it is replied that the supposition involves a confusion respecting the relation of ultimate and proximate choices. The opposing volitions spoken of, if they relate to the ultimate end, involve real vacillations of character. If they relate merely to the means of attaining the ultimate end, and arise from uncertainty of judgment respecting those means, they do not of course affect the character. And so the position remains unshaken, that the attitude of the will is always either "wholly right or wholly wrong, and never partly right and partly wrong at the same time."

The most plausible objection to this theory consists in the attempt to show that it is contrary to the facts of experience; since, it is held, if there were these violent alternations in character from

moment to moment, we should be more distinctly conscious of them than we are, and so the theory has been facetiously called "the pendulum theory of moral action," and declared to be destructive of all ideas of permanence in character, and to imply most violent and impossible transitions, not merely of actual character, but of the emotions appropriately representative of character. To this Dr. Emmons replied that, since the Scripture represents holy affections as entirely distinct from unholy affections, this affords much stronger proof of the fact than a mere want of consciousness can afford to the contrary. "We all know," he says, "that our thoughts are extremely rapid in their succession. We cannot ascertain how many thoughts we have in one hour, or even in one minute. And our affections or volitions may be as rapid in their succession as our thoughts; yea, it is very evident that they are too rapid for observation." [1]

This line of argument was prominent in many of Finney's sermons upon the subject of self-deception. On nothing did he dwell more strongly than on the danger of having the "conscience seared," that is, of becoming, through inattention, oblivious to the character of the choices that are really controlling our activity. The whole effort in such sermons was to bring clearly out into consciousness the character of each ultimate choice, that in view of it the feelings might be appropri-

[1] *Works*, vol. iii. p. 300.

ately moved. From this aim arose, in considerable degree, the analytical character of much of his preaching. He attempted at all points to show the bearing of every proximate choice upon the ultimate object of worthy desire, and to make his hearers feel that in what are regarded as the most trifling things they might be guilty of setting aside the whole law of God. Nothing was more marked in his preaching than its effect in quickening the consciences of his hearers, and making them scrupulous in their action concerning small things as well as great.

Another form of objection to this theory, that the action of the will is at every instant as good as it can be or as bad as it can be, is that it lowers the claims of the law upon those who have by any means impaired their power of action. "If," it is contended, "we dwarf or abridge our powers, we do not thereby abridge the claims of God; if we render it impossible to perform so high a service as we might have done, the Lawgiver, nevertheless, requires the same as before; should we dwarf or completely derange or stultify our powers, He would still hold us under obligation to perform all we might have performed had our powers remained in their integrity." To this Finney replied by a general denial, affirming that the law does not, and cannot in justice, demand of us impossibilities. If a man has sinfully diminished his powers, he is blamed, and may justly be punished, for that sin. But future commands are

based upon the remnants of capacity which the agent still retains. In reference to the effect of ignorance upon our capacity of rendering service to God, Finney contended that "present ignorance is present inability," and that this is as absolute an inability as would be the present want of a hand. If, however, one willingly remains in ignorance of God, this is not a natural inability, since it is within the agent's power instantly to overcome it; as, for example, by opening his eyes when willfully keeping them shut. But the present ignorance of mankind cannot be instantaneously removed by an act of volition on the part of men. Much of the ignorance of man is the natural effect of moral delinquency. Neglect of duty occasions ignorance, and this ignorance, while it remains, constitutes a natural inability to perform those duties of which the mind is ignorant. For this neglect of duty God will hold men fully responsible, and liable to punishment. But the present command for action has reference solely to what is at present attainable by an effort of the will.

Total Depravity of the Race.

With these views of the freedom of the will and the claims of the divine law upon man, Finney's position is already defined with regard to the nature of human depravity, and the method of regeneration and sanctification. Depravity he divides into physical and moral. Physical depravity, as predicated of the mind, expresses the fact that its

powers, "either in substance, or in consequence of their connection with and dependence upon the body, are in a diseased, lapsed, fallen, degenerate state, so that the healthy action of these powers is not sustained."[1] Such depravity has no moral character, but a person may be blameworthy for having rendered himself physically depraved either in body or in mind. Moral depravity is simply a choice at variance with moral right, and is synonymous with sin. Man is both physically and morally depraved. There is no such thing as perfect health in the world. The appetites, passions, and propensities are in a state of most unhealthy development. The human mind is out of balance in consequence of the monstrous development of the sensibility.

Attendant upon this natural depravity, there is a universal moral depravity of the human race. Subsequent to the commencement of moral agency, and previous to regeneration, sin is a universal phenomenon. This Finney proves from the Bible, and by an appeal to history, universal observation, and the universal consciousness of the unregenerate. Still, while carefully distinguishing physical from moral depravity, and insisting that sin is essentially an act of the will, and not an inherent quality of the nature, he believes that there is an infallible connection between the physical depravity of man and his moral depravity, and that "we can predict, without the gift of prophecy, that with a

[1] Finney's *Theology*, pp. 370, 371.

constitution physically depraved, and surrounded with objects to awaken appetite, and with all the circumstances in which human beings first form their moral character, they will seek universally to gratify themselves, unless prevented by the illumination of the Holy Spirit."[1] Later on, he even attempts to account for this universal moral depravity.

"The sensibility acts as a powerful impulse to the will, from the moment of birth, and secures the consent and activity of the will to procure its gratification before the reason is at all developed. This committed state of the will is not moral depravity, and has no moral character until the idea of moral obligation is developed. The moment this idea is developed, this committal of the will to self-indulgence must be abandoned, or it becomes selfishness, or moral depravity. But, as the will is already in a state of committal, and has to some extent already formed the habit of seeking to gratify feeling, and as the idea of moral obligation is at first but feebly developed, unless the Holy Spirit interferes to shed light on the soul, the will, as might be expected, retains its hold on self-gratification."[2]

To the uninitiated it may seem that the radical difference between Finney's views upon this point and those of Dr. Hodge is not so great as they were accustomed to suppose, but that their conten-

[1] Finney's *Theology*, p. 381. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 397.

tions were pretty largely the result of unfortunate phraseology. Finney insisted that, while we were not born with natures actually sinful, our natures were so constituted and circumstanced that sin was certain to be the universal characteristic of our first activities. On the other hand, Hodge, while holding most vigorously that, "in virtue of the union, representative and natural, between Adam and his posterity, his sin is the ground of their [man's] condemnation, that is, of their subjection to penal evils," makes haste to add that "the sin of Adam is no ground to us of remorse," and "there is no transfer of the moral turpitude of his sin to his descendants."[1] A sin of nature which has no moral turpitude will not to most people seem much of a sin, and will appear hardly distinguishable from Finney's "physical depravity."

Nature of Regeneration.

As a logical result of his views concerning the foundation of obligation and the nature of moral depravity, Finney held, with the New School Calvinists in general, that regeneration and conversion are practically synonymous terms, designating an occurrence in which God and the sinner are co-agents. This is in line with the positions maintained in the sermon, already referred to, upon the duty of sinners to make for themselves new hearts.

[1] *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.* By Charles Hodge. New edition. Philadelphia: James S. Claxton. 1864. P. 279.

Regeneration, according to Finney, "is a radical change of the ultimate intention. . . . A selfish ultimate choice is a wicked heart, out of which flows every evil; and a benevolent ultimate choice is a good heart, out of which flows every good and commendable deed."[1] To secure this change of ultimate intention, the instrumentalities necessary are truth, and the means by which truth is made vivid to the mind. All the appointed ordinances and ministrations of the church, the providences of God, and, most of all, the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, force the truth upon the soul as a motive inducing to repentance. Without the presence of divine persuasive agencies, conversion is never secured, and ordinarily not without the coöperation, also, of human instrumentality outside the agent. Regeneration is not, like the breathing of the Spirit upon the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision, a mere act of omnipotence. Still, according to Finney, "regeneration is always induced and effected by the personal agency of the Holy Spirit."[2]

But, although this is brought about by divine moral suasion, there is no necessity of supposing a direct physical agency of the Holy Spirit, acting upon the constitutional susceptibilities of the soul, to quicken it and predispose it to be duly affected by the truth. There is a natural adaptation in the truth, by whatever agency presented, to persuade the soul into changing its ultimate choice, — that is, to make for itself a new heart. As already said,

[1] Finney's *Theology*, p. 410. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 422.

however, this persuasive influence of the truth is never effective except in connection with the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. The importance which Finney attached to this position is seen in the urgency with which, in his revival efforts, he always insisted upon prayer as essential to success. It also seemed extremely important to him that we maintain correct views upon this point, because thus only is the Holy Spirit duly honored without disparaging the truth and the other agencies effective in converting the world.

The practical bearing of the doctrine is set forth by him as follows: —

"If sinners are to be regenerated by the influence of truth, argument, and persuasion, then ministers can see what they have to do, and how it is they are to be 'workers together with God.' So, also, sinners may see that they are not to wait for a physical regeneration or influence, but must submit to and embrace the truth, if they ever expect to be saved. . . . When truth is made clear to the mind and is resisted, the Holy Spirit is resisted, for this is his work, to make the mind clearly to apprehend the truth. . . . Sinners are most likely to be regenerated while sitting under the sound of the gospel, while listening to the clear exhibition of truth. . . . Ministers should aim at and expect the regeneration of sinners upon the spot, and before they leave the house of God." [1]

In these views we have the foundation for Fin-

[1] Finney's *Theology*, p. 426.

ney's whole method of procedure in the promotion of revivals. He pressed every consideration upon the attention of sinners just as heartily and freely as if he expected to convert them himself. He urged upon all believers the responsibility of praying for the coöperation of the Holy Spirit. He threw upon the soul of the sinner the responsibility of immediately accepting or rejecting the truth as then apprehended.

Finney's views respecting the foundation of obligation and the nature of regeneration enabled him to speak with great clearness and discrimination upon the evidences of regeneration and the dangers of self-deception, — subjects which were, as already remarked, very prominent in his preaching, and which are duly dwelt upon in his "Systematic Theology." Concisely stated, the contrast between the regenerate and the unregenerate man is, that the regenerate man has submitted himself to the control of reason and of the moral law of God, — in other words, to the law of disinterested and universal benevolence; whereas the sinner is not governed by reason and principle, but by feeling, desire, and impulse. If you wish to move him, you must appeal strongly to his feeling. The gales of excitement must be raised, and the mainspring of his impulsive action must be touched and directed to rouse his will, before you can quicken him into life. His feelings are his law. On the contrary, the saint has received the will of God as the unfailing index pointing always to the

path of duty. "He makes no calculations to sin in anything. . . . He does not cast about, and pick and choose among the commandments of God; professing obedience to those that are the least offensive to him, and trampling on those that call to a sterner morality and to hardier self-denial. . . . He no more expects to take advantage of his neighbor than he expects to rob him on the highway."[1]

In these statements of the essence of sin, Finney has avoided a confusion which elsewhere pretty generally appears in his principal definition, and in much of his discussion concerning the nature of the sinful choice. Here he says correctly that sin consists in a refusal to be governed by reason and principle, and in submission of the will to the control of the feelings, desires, and impulses. But in other connections he has pretty generally maintained that there is a unity of object in the sinful choice similar to that which characterizes a virtuous choice. As the virtuous choice centres on the good of universal being, so, he maintains, the sinful choice is definitely centred upon self, and is thus synonymous with *selfishness*. The infelicity of this form of statement has been pointed out by President Fairchild, who makes it appear that sin is in no sense true devotion to self-interest, and that the sinner is always aware of this. There is no unity in the sinner's choice. He simply "gives rein to desire and follows where it leads. He is

[1] Finney's *Theology*, p. 448.

carnally-minded. His life presents no definite, self-consistent aim, like that of the good man. The desires themselves are conflicting, and which shall be in the ascendant depends upon constitutional organization, education, and changing circumstances. . . . The sinner always knows that his life is unreasonable, contemplated in view of his pleasure, his welfare, or his duty."[1]

Atonement.

In his statement of the doctrine of justification, as well as in that of the atonement, the influence of Finney's legal training comes prominently into view. Gospel justification consists, he says, "not in the law pronouncing the sinner just, but in his being ultimately governmentally treated as if he were just, that is, it consists in a governmental decree of pardon or amnesty; in arresting and setting aside the execution of the incurred penalty of law; in pardoning and restoring to favor those who have sinned, and those whom the law had pronounced guilty, and upon whom it had passed the sentence of eternal death, and rewarding them as if they had been righteous. It is an act either of the law-making or executive department of government, and is an act entirely aside from, and contrary to, the forensic or judicial power or department of the government. It is an ultimate treatment of the sinner as just; a practical, not a literal pronouncing of him just. It is treating him

[1] *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. xxv. p. 47.

as if he had been wholly righteous, when in fact he has greatly sinned."[1]

In further defining justification, Finney tries to distinguish between the ground of justification and the conditions of its exercise, maintaining that the atonement of Christ was not the ground, but simply one of the conditions, of justification. The ground (by which he means the moving, procuring cause of justification, that in which the plan of redemption originated as its source, and which was the fundamental reason or ground of the whole movement) "was the benevolence and merciful disposition of the whole Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This love made the atonement, but the atonement did not beget this love. The Godhead desired to save sinners, but could not safely do so without danger to the universe, unless something was done to satisfy public, not retributive justice. The atonement was resorted to as a means of reconciling forgiveness with the wholesome administration of justice."[2]

"Public justice required, either that an atonement should be made, or that the law should be executed upon every offender. By 'public justice' is intended that due administration of law that shall secure, in the highest manner which the nature of the case admits, private and public interests, and establish the order and well-being of the universe. In establishing the government of the

[1] Finney's *Theology*, pp. 547, 548.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 550.

universe, God had given the pledge, both impliedly and expressly, that He would regard the public interests, and, by a due administration of the law, secure and promote, as far as possible, public and individual happiness." [1]

If one were disposed to criticise this view, he might show that, after all, Finney had failed, even on his own theory, to point out the real ground of man's justification; for, in the ultimate analysis, the real ground is, not the love of God, but the good of being, which is promoted by the plan of justification. A necessary condition for securing such a provision is, of course, the fact that God is love. Such criticism, however, might seem to be an attempt at discriminating too closely between a ground and a condition of action, and would probably end in still greater confusion of thought.

Having thus stated the governmental necessity of an atonement, Finney proceeded to show that the sufferings of Christ were vicariously substituted for the punishment of such sinners as should, through repentance, seek an interest in the sacrifice. Thus the atonement is universal in the sense that its promises are open to all, and nothing but the sinner's own neglect of duty can prevent participation in its advantages.

While the atonement of Christ is the primary condition of justification, the condition upon man's part is an entire consecration of heart to God in view of all which the atonement signifies. This

[1] Finney's *Theology*, pp. 325, 326.

consecration of heart includes repentance for sin and faith in Christ. In this Finney differed from many of his New School coadjutors, in that he made entire consecration under the persuasive influences of the Holy Spirit precede justification. For this he was severely criticised in this country by Dr. Duffield in the pamphlet already referred to, and by the celebrated textual critic, Tregelles, in England; and it must be confessed that, at first sight, it seems difficult to understand how Finney's view of justification could be maintained under the Calvinistic system, which involves the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints; that is, of the ultimate salvation and glorification of those who have once been justified. But, as will be seen later, Finney experienced no more difficulty upon this point than he did in maintaining, notwithstanding his belief in the self-determining power of the will, the total depravity of the human race previous to regeneration. Finney did, indeed, protest vigorously against the doctrine, maintained by many, that the soul once justified is always justified, and maintained that the penitent soul remains justified no longer than this full-hearted consecration continues; and still he did not believe that the justified soul would ever fail of ultimate salvation, but held that the first experience of justification established such relations between God and the sinner that God could wisely interfere to guard and keep him to the end.

Sanctification.

Since Finney's position with regard to the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life drew upon him severe criticism from almost every side, it is important to ascertain exactly what it was, and what was the occasion of the opposition aroused against it. As already intimated, his attention was turned to the doctrine after he came to Oberlin, and when he was laboring under some depression of mind, in view both of the apparent decadence of the revival spirit of earlier years, and of the relatively low attainments in piety which both he and his converts had made. To counteract this tendency and supply the lack in his previous preaching, he set himself to the work of unfolding more fully the riches of God's promises in the gospel, and of setting forth the exalted privileges of the believer. In this effort he simply followed in the line of his views already formulated with reference to regeneration. Regeneration is, in his view, the beginning of an entire consecration of the soul to God and the interests of his universe. This consecration is practically secured by intensifying the motives to holiness. As the soul is moved to righteousness by the truth, this is brought about only through the enlargement of the sinner's conception of truth.

The agents in the presentation of truth are the various means of grace as applied by the church, and God himself, acting through providence, and,

more directly still, through the Holy Spirit. What Finney aimed to impress upon the Christian public was, that those agencies which secured entire consecration at the beginning of the Christian life might rationally be expected to secure afterwards a permanent state of consecration, and that this was what he meant by the term "sanctification." In his views upon this point he agreed with Emmons, who regarded the sanctification of believers as "precisely the same as continued regeneration."[1]

The exact position maintained at Oberlin was clearly set forth in a declaration of sentiments issued by a convention of those interested in the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, held at Rochester, N. Y., in July, 1841, and of which Finney was a prominent member.

After premising that the opponents of this doctrine occupy the singular position of holding that "it is fatal not to aim at and pray for this attainment in this life," and at the same time "that it is a dangerous error to believe or expect that we shall make this attainment," they proceed to define their own position as follows: —

"The advocates of this doctrine affirm that obedience to the moral law, or a state of entire consecration to God in this life, is in such a sense attainable as to be an object of rational pursuit with the expectation of attaining it.

"We do not believe that the moral law is or

[1] *Works*, vol. iii. p. 309.

ever can be repealed, or so modified in its claims as to demand anything less of any moral agent than the entire, universal, and constant devotion of his whole being to God.

"We do not believe that any such state is attainable in this or any other life as to preclude the possibility and necessity of constant growth in holiness.

"Nor do we believe that any state is attainable in this life that will put the soul beyond a state of warfare with temptation.

"We do not believe that any such state is attainable in this life as will preclude the necessity of constant dependence upon the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the agency and indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

"We do not believe that any such state is attainable in this life as to preclude the necessity of much watchfulness and prayer, together with the diligent use of the ordinances of God's house, and of all the appointed means of grace, to perpetuate holiness of heart.

"We do not believe in any system of quietism, Antinomianism, or inaction in religion.

"We do not regard the true question at issue between us to be, whether a state of entire sanctification has ever been attained in this life; but the true question is that which has been stated above, to wit, Is this state attainable in such a sense as to render its pursuit, with the expectation of attaining it, rational?

"Those of us who have affirmed that this state has been attained, have ever regarded the fact of its attainment only in the light of an argument in proof of its attainability in the sense above explained." [1]

President Fairchild takes issue with Finney respecting this doctrine, and contends that his arguments for permanent consecration are mostly misdirected, being applicable merely to the attainability of entire consecration at any moment, and that no present experience can furnish assurance of the future; but Finney never acknowledged any flaw in the argument, and maintained to the end the importance of the doctrine as above stated. His defense of it, however, rests not upon the mere fact of human ability, but upon his conception of the riches of God's grace, and does not fail to emphasize the idea of man's dependence upon the work of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. If there is any mystery or seeming contradiction in this view, it is only of the same kind as that attending the whole system of gracious influences, and especially the doctrine that those influences shall preserve saints forever in heaven. As the love of Christ has there become all-controlling, so, he believes, it is not too much to hope that the believer may here feel the force of the "expulsive power of this new affection" to such a degree that he shall come into a permanent state of obedience.

Still, Finney did not encourage any to announce

[1] *Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. iii. p. 126.

themselves as living in a permanent state of entire consecration. Nor was he ever known to speak of himself as having attained that state. He knew too well the deceitfulness of the human heart and the fallibility of memory to encourage such claims, and so, as the declaration expresses it, attention was to be turned, not to the question whether any were now actually attaining this state, but whether it was attainable in any such sense that it could rationally be striven after. The believer's great need, according to Finney, is to have such a revelation of the great truths of the gospel that they shall serve as a counterpoise to the abnormal development of the lower propensities. It should therefore be the aim of preachers and teachers, he maintained, so to exalt the character and work of Christ that disloyalty to Him shall seem as odious as a child's disloyalty to his mother, or a patriot's to the flag of his country. The gist of the whole philosophy of the matter is in the following extract: "This can only be done by the revelation to the inward man, by the Holy Spirit, of those great and solemn and overpowering realities of the spirit land that lie concealed from the eye of flesh.

"We often see those around us whose sensibility is so developed in some one direction, that they are led captive by appetite and passion in that direction, in spite of reason and of God. The inebriate is an example of this. The glutton, the licentious, the avaricious man, etc., are examples of this. We sometimes, on the other hand, see, by

some striking providence, such a counter development of the sensibility produced, as to slay and put down those particular tendencies, and the whole direction of the man's life seems to be changed; and, outwardly at least, it is so. From being a perfect slave to his appetite for strong drink, he cannot, without the utmost loathing and disgust, so much as hear the name of his once loved beverage mentioned. From being a most avaricious man he becomes deeply disgusted with wealth, and spurns and despises it. Now, this has been effected by a counter development of the sensibility; for, in the case supposed, religion has nothing to do with it. Religion does not consist in the state of the sensibility, nor in the will's being influenced by the sensibility; but sin consists in the will's being thus influenced. One great thing that needs to be done, to confirm and settle the will in the attitude of entire consecration to God, is to bring about a counter development of the sensibility, so that it will not draw the will away from God. It needs to be mortified or crucified to the world, to objects of time and sense, by so deep and clear and powerful a revelation of self to self, and of Christ to the soul, as to awaken and develop all its susceptibilities in their relations to Him, and to spiritual and divine realities. This can easily be done through and by the Holy Spirit, who takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. He so reveals Christ that the soul receives Him to the throne of the heart, and to reign throughout the whole be-

ing. When the will, the intellect, and the sensibility are yielded to Him, He develops the intelligence and the sensibility by clear revelations of himself in all his offices and relations to the soul, confirms the will, mellows and chastens the sensibility, by these divine revelations to the intelligence."[1]

In Finney's discussion of this subject there follow one hundred and thirty pages in which he unfolds the various aspects of Christ's nature and relations adapted to quicken our spiritual susceptibilities, and to set at work the needed counteracting agencies spoken of. Of these he enumerates no less than sixty-one. The Holy Spirit needs, he says, to reveal Christ to us as king; as mediator; as advocate; as redeemer; as our justification, our judge, the repairer of the breach, the propitiation for our sins, the surety of a better than the first covenant; as dying for our sins; as risen for our justification; as bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows; as the one by whose stripes we are healed; as being made sin for us; as the one on whose shoulders is the government of the world; as head of all things to the church; as having all power in heaven and earth; as the prince of peace; as the captain of salvation; as our passover, our wisdom, and our sanctification; as the redemption of the soul; as our prophet and high priest; as the bread of life; as the fountain of the water of life; as the true God and eternal life; as our own life; as all in all; as the resurrection and the life; as

[1] Finney's *Theology*, pp. 636, 637.

the bridegroom or husband of the soul; as the shepherd, the door, the way of salvation, the truth, the true light; as Christ within us; as our strength, the keeper of our souls, our friend, and elder brother, the true vine, the fountain opened in the house of David; as Jesus the Saviour; as he whose blood cleanseth from all sin; as the wonderful, counselor, the mighty God; as our shield, our portion, our hope, our salvation, and the rock of our salvation; as the rock cleft in the wilderness, the great rock that is higher than we, rising amidst the burning sands of our pilgrimage, under the cooling shadow of which the soul can find repose and comfort; as the rock from which the soul is satisfied with honey; as the rock on which the church is built; as the strength of our hearts; and, finally, as the one through whom we can reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God.

Finney did not hold that we could be expected fully to realize all these aspects of Christ at once; "but that, when tried from time to time, a new revelation of Christ to the soul, corresponding to the temptation, or as the help of the soul in such circumstances, is a condition of its remaining steadfast. This gracious aid or revelation is abundantly promised in the Bible, and will be made in time, so that, by laying hold on Christ in the present revealed relation, the soul may be preserved blameless, though the furnace of temptation be heated seven times hotter than it is wont to be. . . . Sanctification is by faith as opposed to works. That

is, faith receives Christ in all his offices, and in all the fullness of his relations to the soul; and Christ, when received, works in the soul to will and to do of all his good pleasure, not by a physical, but by a moral or persuasive working. Observe, He influences the will. This must be by a moral influence, if its actings are intelligent and free, as they must be to be holy. That is, if He influences the will to obey God, it must be by a divine moral suasion. The soul never in any instance obeys in a spiritual and true sense except it be thus influenced by the indwelling Spirit of Christ." [1]

Finney's estimate of the practical importance of the doctrine of sanctification as he presented it appeared in many ways. In letters written to friends while laboring in England in 1858–59, he repeatedly referred to the low standard tolerated and aimed at by professing Christians, and attributed it largely to the fact that the prevailing doctrine of justification was erroneous in its conception, and Antinomian in its tendency. Sinners were taught to believe that entire consecration was not expected of them, except at occasional intervals, and that they could not rationally hope to attain anything but a spasmodic obedience to God. He felt, therefore, that he had a mission in England, as elsewhere, to raise the standard of Christian hope and endeavor, and so of Christian life.

These ideas were also abundantly developed in his "Lectures on Systematic Theology," where the

[1] Finney's *Theology*, pp. 683, 684.

relation of hope to the instigation of activity and the attainment of result is set forth at length, and where the extent and grounds of that hope with reference to entire sanctification are clearly presented. In this part of the discussion he maintains that whatever removes hope from the human mind cuts the nerve of all activity; for, however ardently we may desire the attainment of an object, the incentive to action will be entirely lacking unless the desire is accompanied with some degree of expectation. No one will use means for the accomplishment of an end unless he believes there is some possibility of connection between the use of the means and the attainment of his purpose. Religion can be undermined with equal effect by representing it either as undesirable or as impossible of attainment. Hence, on the one hand, Finney protests strongly against those representations of Christianity which "throw around and over it a fanatical or a melancholic or a superstitious cant, whining, grimace, or a severity and hatefulness that necessarily disgust rather than attract the enlightened mind," [1] and, on the other hand, represents the consequences as equally fatal if religious attainments are held to be desirable, but beyond our reach, for obligation is only commensurate with ability. If, therefore, men are to be exhorted to entire obedience, and a perfect standard is to be held up as obligatory upon them, it is essential to insist upon the practicability of its attainment.

[1] Finney's *Theology*, p. 718.

Finney's real aim, therefore, was to elevate the standard of practicable attainment by insisting upon the unlimited privileges of the believer. In exalting the promises he was exalting the standard of hope and expectation.[1]

Addressing Calvinists who believe in the doctrine that all who have once experienced regeneration will certainly be kept from final apostasy, and so be saved, Finney contends that it is no more irrational to hope, on the basis of past experiences, for complete sanctification in this life, than to hope, on the same basis, for ultimate victory, and contends that the same degree of doubt may exist as to the reality of personal regeneration as exists with reference to the experiences which give hope of a permanent state of sanctification in this life. In expanding this point, he urges with force that all must admit "that most Christians might rationally hope to be indefinitely better than they are," and that the only rational ground for this hope is in the promised indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The same promises and rational grounds, upon which persons may hope to be better than they are, furnish also the basis for the fuller hope of coming into a state of permanent consecration or sanctification. In this connection, Finney dwelt much upon such passages of Scripture as Eph. iv. 13, where the apostle declares it to be the will of God that the saints should be perfected, and should come to the measure of the stature of the fullness

[1] Finney's *Theology*, pp. 722, 723.

of Christ; and 2 Peter i. 4, where it is said that through divine power believers are made partakers of the divine nature, having "escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust." To the objection drawn from experience that it is easier to keep us from sin "generally than uniformly," it is replied that we do not know this. It may be as easy for God to "give us a complete victory as to suffer us to sin, and then to recover us again. At any rate," he contends, "it is just as truly rational to expect" the fulfillment of the promises holding out to us a hope of permanence in our consecration in this life as of those relating to final perseverance.

A natural tendency of Finney's doctrine of sanctification is to raise in the minds of those accepting it innumerable perplexing questions of casuistry, so that sensitive souls are in danger of becoming despondent over their shortcomings in trifling matters. If, as Finney contends, the "choice of the good of being" involves the choice of all the known means calculated to promote that end, so complicated is the scheme of the universe that it would seem a very hazardous operation to touch any of its secret springs, especially if God is so strict in marking iniquities that to fail in one point is to be guilty of all. This tendency of the doctrine, when connected with that view of justification which makes it ineffectual except so far as it is accompanied by sanctification, was early brought to Finney's attention by the perplexities into which many of his followers fell, and he devoted much

time and strength to the task of setting the matter in its right light. In doing this, he was careful not to lower the standard of the divine law, but spent much effort in defining the limitations of ignorance under which the mind is compelled to act.

Among the most interesting and instructive of the cases of perplexity coming before him is that of a lady in Vermont, who, about the year 1845, confided to him, by correspondence, the difficulties she found in making her life conform to the high ideal which Finney's doctrine had seemed to impose upon her. In her anxiety to adopt a perfect standard of obedience, it appears that she had formed a solemn resolution to devote certain portions of the day to prayer, and she was greatly distressed in mind because she did not succeed in so arranging her other duties as to avoid interference with these hours of devotion. Finney met her difficulty in a letter published in the "Oberlin Evangelist" by explaining that we have no right to make an unalterable resolution which might clash with the duties imposed upon us by God's providential arrangement of our lives. He tells her that our duty to appropriate a certain hour to rest or exercise, to sleep, to prayer, to refreshment, to labor, to recreation, to study, to meditation, to visiting the poor, to taking care of the sick, or to any of ten thousand other supposable things, depends entirely upon the circumstances of the case, and that we should never promise to do or omit anything

that may be inconsistent with the circumstances in which Providence may place us. Providence, he assures her, is nothing else than a great book of divine revelation in which we are passing over successive chapters and pages and verses day by day, and its behests, so far as we are able to understand them, are as binding as a written revelation, or even an audible voice from heaven. She therefore must be careful not to take the whole ordering of her life into her own hands.

In a second communication, Finney answers the good woman's perplexities concerning dress. It appears that, in the high standard of duty which she had adopted, she had come to cherish a morbid fear of conforming to the fashion of the world, and was afraid that she would sin if she should change the form of her dress. Instead of setting aside the difficulties with a sneer, Finney enters into an argument with her to show that variety both in diet and in dress is necessary for the good of the human race; that it is made necessary by the constitution of our nature; and that the beautiful is a proximate good of great value which she is not to despise; and, except in telling her that she is not to pay too high a price for the beautiful by unduly sacrificing other interests, he has little advice to give, only that she is to avoid extravagance and whatever is injurious to health and inconsistent with pure and correct taste, and that her dress is to be determined in a great degree by the society in which she moves. There may be as

much danger that she should think too little of her dress as that she should think too much of it, and he warns her that she is to discriminate carefully between scrupulousness and conscientiousness.

This correspondent was also troubled upon the subject of wearing mourning apparel at the death of her friends. This, again, Finney discusses with her with gentle condescension, entering into the argument *pro* and *con*, touching especially upon that of the inordinate expense likely to be incurred, and the subtle danger of pride entering in as a motive leading to funeral display. But he points out that what she is to do is dependent largely upon her family and social relations, and upon the wishes of her husband, or, if her parents are living, upon their desires. In closing, he dwells on the fact that such struggles as she is passing through in her efforts to settle these embarrassing questions are the common lot of humanity, and by no means imply that she is alienated from her Saviour. On the contrary, they are in the line of Christ's own experiences, and are such as prepare us to share with Him in his glory.

From the fourth letter to this same lady, it seems that she was also greatly exercised by fears that she had failed of her duty to speak or pray in certain public meetings. In respect to this, Finney reminds her that mere suggestions, impulses and feelings are not a sufficient ground for determining one's duty on such occasions. While holding that it is perfectly proper for a woman to

speak in a conference meeting, the propriety of exercising the privilege, he tells her, must be determined in view of all the attendant circumstances. From her statement of the case, his opinion is, that Satan is trying to make her appear ridiculous. She must take into account the public sentiment in her community, and the views of her friends, in determining what is proper and right in the case.

In the same letter, replying to her queries about what she should eat and drink, Finney confesses that when he first read Graham's works on physiology and dietetics, he was deeply interested in them, and, as it was at the time the best light, as he supposed, which he could get, he became very scrupulous in his conformity to Graham's views. "But after a while," he says, "I found myself in complete bondage to what is called Grahamism." He adds that where some are manifestly in bondage to their appetite, and have no command over themselves, others are in equal bondage to Grahamism or some other *ism*, and so are in danger of starving themselves to death before they can get a particular kind of diet.

Another general question, upon which Finney's followers were perplexed, related to the intensity of feeling which should accompany their virtuous volitions. This he solved by pointing out that no executive volition calls for any more force of feeling than is required to secure it. The amount of feeling which we can endure is limited by the

amount of our physical strength, and the law of economy would dissuade us from wasting our energies. We should save our strength in order to concentrate it upon the supreme efforts of life. Steadiness of purpose does not involve either an iron-clad uniformity of outward action or a dead level of emotion, either high or low.

Election and Reprobation.

Upon these doctrines Finney held to the essential Calvinistic forms of statement, agreeing in this with the New School Calvinists of that time in accepting the facts of the case, but insisting on an explanation of their ground which should be in consistency with their view of the freedom of the will. Finney's statement is, that God does indeed "bestow on men unequal measures of gracious influence, but that in this there is nothing arbitrary." He bestows upon all sufficient grace to secure their salvation if properly improved. He does for all as much as He wisely can, but the Creator's knowledge enables Him to see beforehand at what points in his moral government He can concentrate influences, as, for example, upon the Apostle Paul, so as to secure a result different from what would have occurred under the ordinary means of grace. If conversions like that of Paul were the ordinary mode of entering the kingdom of heaven, every one would look for and expect the same degree of attention, and what is now extraordinary would come to have no more persuasive force than the

ordinary. The problem before the divine mind was to give greatest influence to the system as a whole, and in doing this the system must be so arranged that common means of grace shall not be supplanted by the more violent demonstrations of power.

The crucial question, however, in determining one's Calvinistic position, is, "Was election in the order of nature subsequent to, or did it precede, the divine foreknowledge?" To this Finney gives the Calvinistic as distinguished from the Arminian answer, namely, that logically the knowledge of what could wisely be done precedes the knowledge of what ought to be done; and that the knowledge of what ought to be done precedes, in the divine mind, the knowledge of what would be done. "Foreknowledge of what would be done followed or was subsequent to election."[1]

This position concerning election, or the positive bestowment of gracious privileges designed to lead men to repentance, involves also a doctrine of reprobation. In deciding upon the system as a whole, God must have designed the points of lesser privilege as well as of greater opportunities. In this He is dealing with a problem which is limited by the existence of logical contradictions; as, for example, in the inducements brought upon men to supply their temporal wants, man is ordinarily compelled to sow and reap, and gather into barns, and thresh and grind and cook, before he can pro-

[1] Finney's *Theology*, pp. 776, 778.

vide himself with bread. It is only on extraordinary occasions that God has provided manna from heaven, and multiplied loaves and fishes without stint. Such extraordinary provisions could not be claimed as the right of all, without throwing discredit upon the ordinary means, and robbing them of their salutary stimulus. So, in the distribution of the persuasive influences of the spiritual world, every one has sufficient to insure his salvation if rightly used, but he has no absolute claim upon the store of extraordinary privileges. Some must be content with the common conditions of life. As a benevolent being, God must resign such to their fate. This is reprobation. No means are used designing to make them sinful. The simple case is, that God cannot bestow a superabundance of opportunity upon them without robbing himself of the power of urging greater motives upon other objects of his creative love. With reference to the lost, we must suppose that "God regards their destruction as a less evil to the universe than would be such a change in the administration and arrangements of his government as would secure their salvation. Therefore, for their foreseen wickedness and perseverance in rebellion, under circumstances the most favorable to their virtue and salvation in which He can wisely place them, He is resolved upon their destruction, and has already in purpose cast them off forever."[1]

[1] Finney's *Theology*, pp. 785–787.

Divine Sovereignty.

In his statement of the doctrine of divine sovereignty, Finney exerted himself to the utmost to avoid any contradiction of the rational principles of benevolence. The "sovereignty of God," he contends, "is nothing else than infinite benevolence directed by infinite knowledge." The knowledge of God is such that it cannot be increased by other counselors, and hence He must act upon that knowledge, however far above the comprehension of his creatures it may be. It is in accepting the prerogative of the Divine Being to do things which are above our sight, that the strongest demands are made upon faith. This aspect of the Creator's activities also leaves room and creates a demand for a special revelation of the Divine to man. It is possible to conceive that the entire will of God could be inferred at each point of time from the pulsations of force in every portion of space in the universe; but such a feat of interpretation would involve in the interpreter the possession of infinite knowledge and experience. In this appears the absurdity of pure rationalism. The human reason is not competent to attempt a complete interpretation of every portion of the universe coming within its purview. It is easier for the Creator to give the reason assurance of the reality of a special revelation than to give it confidence in its attempts to unravel from experience his entire scheme of action.

With all the emphasis which Finney lays upon the freedom of the human will, he still falls back, for comfort and support, upon the thought that, though God is infinite and his ways inscrutable, we still have abundant evidence that all He does is prompted by love and guided by perfect wisdom, and concludes his chapter upon this subject with one of those characteristic passages which relieve his ponderous work from dullness: —

"A proper understanding of God's universal agency and sovereignty, of the perfect wisdom and benevolence of every measure of his government, providential and moral, is essential," he says, "to the best improvement of all his dispensations toward us, and to those around us. When it is understood that God's hand is directly or indirectly in everything that occurs, and that He is infinitely wise and good, and equally wise and good in every single dispensation; that He has one end steadily and always in view; that He does all for one and the same ultimate end, and that this end is the highest good of himself and of universal being; I say, when these things are understood and considered, there is a divine sweetness in all his dispensations. There is then a divine reasonableness, and amiableness, and kindness, thrown like a broad mantle of infinite love over all his character, works, and ways. The soul, in contemplating such a sacred, universal, holy sovereignty, takes on a sweet smile of delightful complacency, and feels secure, and reposes in perfect

peace, surrounded and supported by the everlasting arms." [1]

Perseverance of Saints.

With reference to the perseverance of saints, Finney encounters, as has already been shown, the same metaphysical difficulties which were urged against his doctrine of entire sanctification in this life. If the will is free, it is often asked, how can there be any certainty of its future action? But that there may be such certainty, all hold who believe that the saints in heaven will remain immutable in their happy condition. Certainty, therefore, does not necessarily contradict freedom, even in the opinion of Arminians. On the same ground, Finney maintained that the connection between regeneration and final glorification might be made certain without any necessary abrogation of human freedom, and thus without inconsistency he was able fully to believe "that all who are at any time true saints of God are preserved by his grace and spirit through faith, in the sense that, subsequently to regeneration, obedience is their rule, and disobedience only the exception; and that being thus kept they will certainly be saved with an everlasting salvation." [2]

But the attainment of final salvation implies the use and improvement of all the means and gracious influences provided in the case. To the question, Is there no danger that a regenerate per-

[1] Finney's *Theology*, pp. 802, 803, 811.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 842.

son will fall away? Finney answers, Yes and No. In the sense of there being danger that a skillful pilot will run his ship upon the rocks if he is negligent of his duty, Yes. But in the sense of there being danger that this pilot will be criminally negligent of his duty, No. It may be that the very presence and prominence of the possible danger is a means of preventing the actual danger. The illustration which Finney uses, although written before the days of Blondin, is that of a person who should attempt to cross the gorge below the falls of Niagara upon a rope stretched from brink to brink. If he relaxes his effort for a single instant, he will fail. But the very presence of the danger keeps him from relaxing his effort, and confidence in his success is in part the means of bestowing upon him the power to attain it through the use of the means. It is thus that Paul, with his shipwrecked companions, made the most scrupulous use of means, although a positive divine promise of security had been made to him.

The proof of the doctrine of the perseverance of saints is, with Finney, entirely scriptural, but of this he finds such an abundance as effectually to overcome the great hesitancy which, from theoretical considerations, he at first felt in giving adhesion to it. He finds the Scriptures teaching "the persevering nature of true religion through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit." By the phrase "persevering nature of true religion" he does not mean "that religion, as it exists in the hearts of

the saints in this life, would of itself, if unsupported by the grace and indwelling Spirit of God, prevail and triumph over his enemies; but the thing intended is, that, through the faithfulness of God, He that has begun, or shall begin, a good work in my heart will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ." [1]

It is instructive to recall that when, at last, in the silence of the midnight hour, Finney, with his fingers upon his failing pulse, saw that death was approaching, he had no ecstatic vision, but simply said, "I have not apostatized, have I?" The pathos of these dying words is fully seen only by recalling a few paragraphs written by him more than thirty years before, when treating of the doctrine now in question.

"It is also admitted," he then wrote, "that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is liable to abuse, and often is abused by the carnal and deceived professor; but is this a good reason for rejecting it, and for withholding its consolations from the tempted, tempest-tossed saint? By no means. Such are the circumstances of temptation from within and without, in which the saints are placed in this life, that when they are made really acquainted with themselves, and are brought to a proper appreciation of the circumstances in which they are, they have but little rational ground of hope, except what is found in this doctrine. The natural tendency and inevitable consequence of a

[1] Finney's *Theology*, p. 869.

thorough revelation of themselves to themselves would be to beget despair, but for the covenanted grace and faithfulness of God. What saint, who has ever been revealed to himself by the Holy Spirit, has not seen what Paul saw when he said, 'In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing'? Who that has been made acquainted with himself does not know that he never did and never will take one step towards heaven, except as he is anticipated and drawn by the grace of God in Christ Jesus? Who that knows himself does not understand that he never would have been converted but for the grace of God anticipating and exciting the first motions of his mind in a right direction? And what true saint does not know that, such are his former habitudes, and such the circumstances of trial under which he is placed, and such the downward tendency of his own soul on account of his physical depravity, that although converted he shall not persevere for an hour, except the indwelling grace and Spirit of God shall hold him up, and quicken him in the path of holiness?

"It shocks and distresses me to hear professed Christians talk of being saved at all, except upon the ground of the anticipating, and persevering, and sin-overcoming, and hell-subduing grace of God in Christ Jesus. Why, I should as soon expect the Devil to be saved as that any saint on earth will be, if left, with all the promises of God in his hands, to stand and persevere without the

drawings, and inward teachings, and over-persuading influences of the Holy Spirit. . . . This doctrine, though liable to abuse by hypocrites, is nevertheless the sheet anchor of the saints in the hours of conflict.

"I could no more hope that myself or any one else would persevere in holiness in our best estate, even for one day or hour, if not kept by the power of God through faith, than I could hope to fly to heaven."[1]

[1] Finney's *Theology*, pp. 876–878.

CHAPTER VIII.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS.

THE secret of Finney's prolonged influence in Oberlin cannot be fully understood without a closer insight into his private life and personal characteristics. With this in view, it is important to note that Finney was a true gentleman, by every instinct of his nature as well as by the habitual schooling of his conduct, ever solicitous for the interest of others, and full of sympathy for them in all their trials and temptations. His native humility was manifest in his very errors concerning methods of education. Not having been through the prescribed course of study himself, it was difficult for him at times to understand why *any one* could not at the age of twenty-nine be taken from the calling in which he had been successful, and by a short course be transformed into a powerful preacher like himself. So thoroughly did he realize his own dependence upon the aid of the Spirit, and upon the coöperation of the Christian people by whom he was surrounded, that he was oblivious to the part played in his marvelous career by his own abilities. It is even a more striking evidence of his genuine humility and courtesy that for forty years he could coöperate heartily in the work of a

great school where he was constantly overruled by the judgment of his associates as to many details in educational methods.

It was contrary to all of Finney's natural tastes and habits to work through ecclesiastical machinery. He aimed rather to avoid synods and general assemblies, and could have little patience in listening to the discussions of the petty technicalities occupying so much of the time of ecclesiastical bodies. Least of all could he endure the party rivalries so often appearing in them. Considerable prejudice was at one time worked up against him in view of a report that on some public occasion he had said there was a jubilee in hell whenever the Presbyterian General Assembly met; but as sober-minded historians look back over the wranglings which led to the division of 1837, they have come to think that he was not far wrong in this opinion.

Finney was still living when the First National Congregational Council met at Oberlin in 1871, and he attended some of its sessions. As this grave body was heatedly discussing what it should call itself, — whether a council, a conference, an association, a convention, or something else, — it was interesting to see the expression of merriment on his face at the comical aspect of the scene; and yet, a few moments afterwards, when, in the order of business, he was to address the members upon the gift of the Holy Spirit, notwithstanding the weight of fourscore years under which his physical

frame was bent, his mind kindled in view of the great themes that it had ever been his object to expound, and he treated the subject so tenderly and delicately as completely to disarm the prejudice of those who had been his lifelong opponents with respect to doctrinal questions. The triumph was complete; the whole audience was suffused with tears as their thoughts were turned from their trifling topics of ecclesiastical machinery toward Christ himself and his salvation.

As an illustration of Finney's candor, it is related that when he was laboring in Boston, in 1843, a portion of the city was excited, and many of the people were being misled, by the preaching of William Miller, who was at that time announcing the speedy end of the world. Finney was urged to controvert his views, but rather than to do it in public he chose to visit Miller and secure a private conference. This he did, and, having previously read carefully all of Miller's books, so that he knew where the weakness of his argument was, he succeeded in convincing him to some extent of his error, and thus partially limited the lamentable consequences naturally following from a widespread acceptance of Miller's mistaken theories. This attitude of candor, and of carefulness about accepting premises incapable of proof, characterized Finney throughout his life, and had much to do with the marked success which he attained as teacher, author, and preacher.

The sincerity of Finney's heart exhibited itself

in a very touching manner in a scene which I myself witnessed some time in the year 1856. It was at the Sabbath services in the First Church at Oberlin. In the morning he began a sermon upon the training of children; and, as was frequently the case, continued until the clock struck twelve, then stopped suddenly short, saying that he would finish in the afternoon. In the afternoon he took up the subject where he had left it, but for some cause did not have his wonted freedom of utterance. The reason was soon made apparent. Pausing abruptly, he said: "Brethren, why am I trying to instruct you on the subject of training your children in the fear of God, when I do not know that a single one of my own children gives evidence of having been converted?" He burst into tears, knelt down in the pulpit, offered a few words of prayer, and dismissed the audience. It is but just to say that this is freed from all suspicion of being designed for effect by the fact that his children were not then present; and it is but just to them to say, also, that none of them were by any means irreverent or disobedient, and that all subsequently became active and efficient members of the Christian church.

Finney's sense of humor was intensely keen, and it was a constant struggle for him to confine its exercise to proper occasions. This, however, he very uniformly succeeded in doing. Being asked at one time by his pupils why he never had preached upon the text which compares the wicked

to those who forsake the fountain of living water, and hew out for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water, he replied that the picture was so ludicrous, and the folly so extraordinary, of a man's forsaking a living fountain, and spending his time trying to get water by working a creaking, leaky pump in an empty cistern, that he did not dare trust himself before an audience with it.

Very naturally Oberlin drew to itself a number of eccentric and ill-balanced people, whose zeal for the principles of the place was not always in accordance with knowledge. One of these was a Mrs. J., who was greatly interested in the doctrine of entire sanctification, and was much given in prayer-meeting to bemoaning the defects of her neighbors. In one of these meetings, when Finney was presiding, she recounted in tearful tones the sacrifices which she and her husband had made in leaving their distant home and coming to Oberlin on account of their interest in the doctrines here maintained; but she was grieved to confess that she found a great many people here who were still unsanctified, and, indeed, there were very few who came up to the high standard which could properly be expected of them. "Sister J., Sister J.," said President Finney, interrupting her, "what have you been doing to make the place better since you came here? Have you made the place any better since you came here?" Sister J. was confounded, and neither she nor any one else failed to see the point.

At another time a Deacon C., at Oberlin, who was very good, but rather contentious and much given to eloquence in the prayer-meeting, began to dilate upon the imperfections both of the place and of the pastor. Among other things he said: "The best man that I ever knew was Deacon M., way down in Berkshire County, Massachusetts. But he was a very humble man. He always acknowledged himself to be a great sinner, and confessed that everything that he did was sinful. Though he was the best man I ever knew, he used to say that every prayer he offered to God was so full of sin that it was not fit to be received until the blood of Christ had washed it white as snow." As Deacon C. waxed more and more eloquent in this strain, Finney, who was leading the meeting, sat for some time quietly in his chair, but finally, placing his hand on his forehead, and unable longer to suppress the unfeigned agony of his soul, he repeated twice, with a groan, "Brother C., Brother C., you need to break down! you need to break down!" Brother C. looked around over the audience, began to perceive the unseemliness of his censorious remarks, and said, "I guess it is about time for me to sit down." Not another word was said upon the point, and the current of the meeting flowed on with its wonted power.

This incident may serve a good purpose in explaining the phrase "breaking down," which has appeared several times in reference to Finney's work. Nettleton, for example, spoke of "breaking

down" as one of the reprehensible processes connected with Finney's revivals. But, as this incident shows, the breaking down of which Finney used to speak was a breaking down of the heart into the gentleness of Christ's love and compassion. One of his own most frequent experiences was this very breaking down of his sensibilities in view of what Christ had done for him and for the world.

Finney was ever in the best of personal relations with all the professors and citizens of Oberlin, and was most genial and lively in his companionships. While he saw clearly the personal weaknesses of his friends, his good-humor was such that he could joke about them without giving offense. This is well illustrated in the following incident, vouched for by the person upon whom the joke was played.

One of the professors, with whom Finney was very intimate, and for whom he had the highest esteem, was rather phlegmatic in his movements, and there was often considerable delay in getting a response when his door-bell was rung. At one time, however, the response by one of the children was rather quicker than usual. But upon opening the door, he found that Finney had rung the bell and then turned back, being already at the door-yard gate on his way to the street. Looking around as he heard the door opened, Finney said: "Why, is that you, George? You need not have been in so much of a hurry. I was on my way to

the post-office, and I thought I would ring the bell as I went along, and stop as I came back."

In a preceding chapter (p. 171) a quotation on the sin of heedlessly borrowing tools was made from one of Finney's sermons on "The Signs of a Seared Conscience." The circumstance calling out the passage, and the effects of the appeal as related to me by his son, Frederick Norton, well illustrate the terms upon which Finney dwelt with his neighbors and associates, and the mutual confidence they reposed in each other. Finney had engaged a number of laborers to come to his house on Saturday to make his garden and do some other work of a similar nature; but when he went for various tools, they were not to be found. After searching the premises diligently without success, he sent the men home, telling them to come again on Monday.

The passage already quoted, like most of the reports of Finney's sermons, does but scant justice to the original. As delivered, it was accompanied by various lively personal references in language somewhat as follows: "Just consider the condition in which I found myself yesterday. I engaged a number of men to make the garden and put in my crops; but when I went to look for my farming tools, I could not find them. Brother Mahan borrowed my plough some time ago, and has forgotten to bring it back. Brother Morgan has borrowed my harrow, and I presume has it still. Brother Beecher has my spade and my hoe, and so my tools were all scattered. Where many of

them are, no man knows. I appeal to you, how can society exist when such a simple duty as that of returning borrowed tools ceases to rest as a burden upon the conscience? It is in such delinquencies as these that the real state of our hearts is brought to the light of day."

The effect of this appeal was everywhere visible on the following day. Very early in the morning, Oberlin began to move from centre to circumference. Norton was called up by his father before light to go out and pacify the watch-dog, which seemed to be in trouble. The occasion of the commotion was that a Scotchman, living across the street, had borrowed a saw-horse, and was endeavoring to get it home unobserved; but as he climbed over the fence he found himself within the dog's domain, and the mastiff had seized him and was holding him down in triumph, while the saw-horse was lying near by as a mute witness to the guilty conscience. All through the day, farming implements and tools came in from every quarter. Not satisfied with rearing altars to the deities they knew, these delinquent borrowers reared altars to unknown gods. Tools came in that Finney had never owned and never heard of. Where they belonged was more than any man was ever able to tell. But doubtless they relieved the consciences of the guilty. Though Finney was by no means insensible to this humorous outcome, it would be a mistake to suppose that he had made the appeal in any levity of spirit. Nor was there

in it any censoriousness, such as to engender ill-feeling on the part of those who had been thus publicly arraigned. But the whole circumstance illustrates, in some degree, the tendency to exaggeration which frequently characterized Finney's appeals, and which made it necessary to hear him more than once in order to get a just idea of the real symmetry of his mind.

Finney's prayers were always a most interesting and affecting part of the public services at Oberlin. Apparently, he prayed in public as he did in his closet, forgetful that any were present beside himself and his Creator. His petitions for the afflicted and needy of the parish were peculiarly touching and tender. He seemed to have every individual always before his mind. The students can never forget how, when the autumn term drew to a close, and they were about to face the trials of teaching in the winter schools throughout the region, his prayers for them would increase in fervency as he besought the Lord to keep the "dear children from misfortune and evil, and to gird them with strength for their trying work." His petitions were entirely free from formality, and were usually limited to objects of immediate interest, and only on occasions comprehended the country and the world at large. Apparently, he relied much upon the direct leadings of the Holy Spirit in prayer, and this childlike spirit must be kept in mind if we would properly understand the significance of some of the immediate answers that came.

Probably his aversion to uttering many of the ordinary general petitions arose from his doctrine respecting the "prayer of faith." In his lecture upon that subject he replies, in answer to the question, At what times are we to offer this prayer? "When you have evidence from promises, or prophecies, or providences, or the leading of the Spirit, that God will do the things you pray for. You have no evidence that it is God's will to convert the whole world at once."[1] Some of his remarkable prayers for rain can scarcely be accounted for except upon the supposition that he was led by the Spirit; as, for example, in the case next to be related. We draw this inference partly from the fact that, a year or two subsequent to this time, there was a formal day of fasting and prayer appointed at Oberlin for the express purpose of securing rain; but Finney's name does not appear in connection with the appointment, and the prayer was by no means as productive of results as was that which we are about to relate.

The summer of 1853 was unusually hot and dry, so that the pastures were scorched, and there seemed likely to be a total failure of the crops. Under these circumstances, the great congregation gathered one Sabbath in the church at Oberlin as usual, when, though the sky was clear, the burden of Finney's prayer was for rain. In his prayer he deepened the cry of distress which went up from every heart by mentioning in detail the conse-

[1] *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, p. 77.

quences of prolonged drought. It was in about these words: —

"We do not presume, O Lord, to dictate to thee what is best for us; yet thou dost invite us to come to thee as children to a father, and tell thee all our wants. *We want rain.* Our pastures are dry. The earth is gaping open for rain. The cattle are wandering about and lowing in search of water. Even the little squirrels in the woods are suffering from thirst. Unless thou givest us rain, our cattle must die, and our harvests will come to nought. O Lord, send us rain, and send it now! Although to us there is no sign of it, it is an easy thing for thee to do. *Send it now*, Lord, for Christ's sake! Amen."[1]

Says a correspondent,[2] in describing the remainder of the scene, "I remember, as distinctly as yesterday, the prolongation, the fervency, the urgency, the filial pleadings, of those petitions. I remember that at length he closed, took his text, and preached perhaps ten or fifteen minutes, when we began to hear the patter upon the roof. I remember that he preached a few minutes longer; that the rattle and the roar increased; that suddenly he stopped and said, 'I think we had better thank God for the rain;' that he gave out the hymn, —

> 'When all thy mercies, O my God!
> My rising soul surveys;'

[1] Rev. Joseph Adams in *Reminiscences*, etc., pp. 55, 56.
[2] Rev. O. B. Waters.

that the whole congregation arose and sang it; that the rain continued, so that, when at last we were dismissed at the noon hour, multitudes stood around, and waited till the full skies could pour out their abounding floods."

At another time he prayed for rain in the following words: "O Lord, the long-looked-for clouds are at last over our heads, and we pray that they may now burst, and deluge the parched earth. Do not let them pass by, and discharge their waters upon the lake, as they have done so often of late, for thou knowest, O Lord, that there is already water enough in the lake." The effect of this prayer is not related. We have already referred to some of the remarkable seasons of prayer which were held with his students upon the eve of their graduation.[1] But occasionally his irrepressible humor came to the surface in the prayers with which he habitually closed the hour of class-room work. At one time, when for some reason the class met for a few days in his study, one or two of them yielded to the soporific influence of the well-cushioned seats and fell asleep. In his closing prayer, Finney did not forget these unfortunate members, but prayed that they might hereafter be kept awake. When the class came into the room the next day, they found the easy-chairs displaced by hard-seated chairs from the kitchen. Finney good-humoredly remarked to them, "You see, young gentlemen, I have found a way to answer my own prayer."

[1] See page 155.

At another time, when he had been dwelling at great length upon technical questions of theology, and when the danger of the students' getting merely the form of sound words without their power was great, Finney closed the hour with the prayer that the Lord would mellow their hearts, and give life and power to the truth, for, if He did not, their whole system of theology "would be so dry that it would be fit only to choke a moral agent."

On another day, when the class in theology had been quite voluble in expressing their own views, Finney in closing prayed, "O Lord, do not let these young men think that, because they have let down a little line into the infinite sea of thy greatness, they have sounded all its depths! Save them from conceit, O Lord!"

When the National Congregational Council was organized at Oberlin, advantage was taken of its presence to dedicate the building for the theological seminary (named from the event Council Hall), though it was then but partially completed. Finney was asked to make the dedicatory prayer. Before beginning his prayer he said: "I have felt somewhat embarrassed with regard to performing this part of the service, because the house is not entirely finished. I have several times refused to take part in dedicating a house of worship that was not paid for; but this is neither finished nor paid for, and hence I have had some hesitation about offering it to God in this state. But I

remember that I have often offered myself to God, and I am far from being finished yet, and why should I not offer this house just as it is? I will do so, relying upon the determination of those having it in charge to finish it as soon as possible." [1]

In general, Finney respected the rule for which he voted in the New Lebanon Convention, that it was improper to pray by name for persons in public without their permission. But I remember hearing him pray for Professor M. in a somewhat extraordinary manner, though one which unwittingly revealed his high appreciation of his associate's reputation for profundity. Finney was conducting the preliminary exercises on a Sabbath morning in which Professor M. was to preach, and he prayed that "Brother M. might be baptized with the Spirit, and might have great simplicity of speech and clearness of utterance given him, so that the great truths of the gospel should be made plain and brought within our reach, so that we should not all have to get up on tiptoe to understand what he was saying."

As a pastor, Finney attended faithfully to the spiritual functions of his office. In addition to preaching, he led the weekly prayer-meeting, and held an inquiry meeting at some time during each week, and always stood ready to respond to every genuine call from those who were in spiritual trouble. In a family of my acquaintance a lad of

[1] *Oberlin News*, August 20, 1874.

twelve had died of consumption some years before. The house was a mile away through the woods, but the mother often told me how Mr. Finney, as he went out with his gun for recreation, would regularly come around to the bedside of her dying boy to bring him the consolations of the gospel, and to pray for sustaining grace. His presence in the sick-room was as gentle as that of a woman.

He was very fond of little children, and infants were rarely restless when he took them in his arms, as he ordinarily did, to administer the rite of baptism. Children of a larger growth were usually somewhat afraid of him; but needlessly so, as they found on actually coming in contact with him. At one time he met a neighbor's little girl riding horseback, and beckoned her to come to him. With much trembling she rode up to see what he had to say. He asked her if she was not Dr. S.'s daughter. She replied, "Yes." He remarked: "I thought so. That 's a hard horse you are riding. You go right home and tell your father that he must give you an easier horse to ride than that." It is related, also, that several times in succession, as he met a brother of this girl, he asked the boy what his name was. The boy at length mischievously gave him the wrong name. Whereupon Finney looked at him good-humoredly and said, "Why, John S., what a liar you are!" Of course there was no longer any barrier of reserve separating him from these children.

From his reputed severity of manner in preach-

ing, and the high standard which he set for Christian character, it might be supposed that he would have belonged to the high Puritan party in respect to church discipline. But such was not the case. On the contrary, considerable complaint was made from time to time that he was inclined to throw obstacles in the way of church discipline. The element of truth in this was that he regarded it as his duty to check hasty movements in church discipline, and to insist on giving every one who was charged with unchristian character ample time to vindicate himself if he could do it. As a lawyer, he very naturally emphasized the legal maxim, that the person charged with fault should have full benefit of the doubt. In fact, vigorous as were his habitual denunciations of sin, his charity was broad and considerate, and he was slow to accuse any one of an excommunicable offense. His great reliance for securing the purity of the church was upon positive influences put forth by the church to secure repentance and sanctification.

The experience of Rev. Dr. James Brand, Finney's successor in the pastorate of the First Church at Oberlin, pleasantly reveals the attractive side of Finney's character. After relating the trepidation with which he first preached in the presence of Finney in his own church, Dr. Brand goes on to say that, when introduced the next morning at his house, all his preconceived notions of him were utterly revolutionized. "A more genial, tender, sympathetic, childlike character," he says, "I had

never met. From that moment he was a father and a friend, not a judge. Doubtless he had his inward judgments, but during the two remaining years of his life, though living still among a people who idolized him, and to whom his word was law, he never, to my knowledge, offered a suggestion, or made a criticism upon the management of the church (though doubtless many might justly have been made), except when earnestly solicited to do so. If all ex-pastors were like Mr. Finney, no new minister would need to have any of the traditional fear from the presence of his predecessor in his parish. It became the frequent delight of my life to call and question him as to what ought to be done and said for the best interests of the people. He always sent me away a wiser man, and with deeper longing to win men to Christ. It was unquestionably due largely to his wisdom and Christian sympathy that the people to whom he had ministered for forty years could consent to bear with a new man, and a comparative novice at that, in his place. . . . Like the apostle John, President Finney made love the principal theme of his old age. He could hardly refer to the love of God without weeping."

An important element in Finney's influence was the strength and warmth of his personal friendships, and the tenderness of his family life. It is interesting, in looking over the file of his letters to his warm friend, Deacon Lamson, of the Park Street Church, Boston, to find them concluding

with such expressions as these: "Love to Mary, and a thousand kisses to the children;" "Love to all your dear ones;" "With oceans of love to our dear Mary and the children, and as much for yourself as you can desire;" "I hope Mary is not ill. I thought if she had been seriously ill you would have informed us, but do relieve our suspense and anxiety upon this point."

In his business habits, Finney was systematic and punctilious: he quickly noticed any irregularity in the college bell; his door-yard was a model of neatness; every fruit tree in his garden was on his mind, and when absent from home he would make particular inquiries of his children about each tree. His reading was largely in philosophical lines, and he was among the first to detect and expose the fallacies of Hamilton and Mansel concerning the philosophy of the unconditioned. Nor was his interest limited to philosophical and theological subjects. Dr. Dascomb often referred to the keen criticisms made by Finney upon the chemical theories then in vogue, showing how clearly he discerned the weak points in inductive logic. After his death it was found that he had been a constant reader of the "New York Nation," and that he had preserved a complete file of the numbers for presentation to the college library.

Mr. Finney was married three times. His first wife, Lydia Andrews, to whom he was married, under the circumstances already mentioned, in 1824, died in December, 1847. By her he had

several children, four of whom survived their father, — Charles G., who is a lawyer in California; Frederick Norton, a prominent actor in promoting the railroad interests in Wisconsin; Helen, the wife of Gen. J. Dolson Cox, of Cincinnati, Ohio; and Julia, wife of Hon. James Monroe, of Oberlin, Ohio.

The tribute which Mr. Finney bore, soon after her death, to his first wife's memory, is touching in the extreme. In a communication to the "Oberlin Evangelist," written the 25th of December, 1847, he recounts the circumstances of her sickness and death, and refers to the great assistance she had rendered him in his work. From this it would appear that she was constitutionally diffident, and inclined to take a despondent view of her Christian character, so that, in the earlier revivals in which she accompanied him, the sermons in which he dwelt upon the danger of self-deception were appropriated by her to an undesirable degree; and thus she was in a constant state of inordinate self-abasement, and never came to be steadily at rest about her hope in Christ until they came to Oberlin, soon after which she "received such light and grace that she ever after held fast her confidence without wavering. . . . My dear wife," he writes, "used to look up to me as her spiritual guide and teacher under God, but in justice to her I would say that she taught me many most valuable lessons. She showed me in many things how to *live*, and now she has shown me how to *die*. Oh, I ask

myself, Can I die like that? Certainly not without the abounding and sovereign grace of God."

He subsequently married Mrs. Elizabeth Ford Atkinson, of Rochester, N. Y., who was of great assistance to him in conducting meetings for women in his later revival labors in England and in Boston. She died in 1863. His third wife was Rebecca Allen Rayl, who had been for some time previously assistant principal of the ladies' department at Oberlin, and who still survives him. His own death occurred August 16, 1875.

The children look back upon their home life with great tenderness and satisfaction. While specially solicitous to keep them from evil associations, their father was by no means severe in the restrictions to which he subjected them. His occasional strong utterances against amusements were really aimed against their abuse, and against engaging in them when they interfered with spiritual development. But, according to his theory, everything was sinful when out of its place, and when permitted to usurp the position of the supreme end of being. His grandchildren loved to be in his family while attending school, and are fond of relating the pranks which they played upon their grandfather, and the good-natured way he accepted them. One of the marked features of his later life, observed by all his acquaintances and all his guests, was his special fondness for a beautiful little granddaughter who was for some time in his family.

As illustrating the confidence and freedom of communication between himself and his children, the following letter, found among his most valued documents, is not without interest. It was written to him in 1843, when he was in Boston, by a little daughter, then six years old, and relates to a painful discovery that a man who had been esteemed and trusted by his general acquaintances, and especially by her father, was dishonest and a totally unworthy character. The grief and dismay of the little child is thus expressed: —

My dear Father, — I will write you a few lines, dear father. Come, let us converse about thieves. Mr. —— is a thief! Will you pray for me, dear father? We suppose him one of the most wicked men in ——. Oh! I would not be a wicked thief like him. We suppose that he has stolen hundreds of dollars. Oh, oh! I will just tell you all my heart. I feel very sad, dear father. What shall I say? What shall I do? Your own dear friend is a villain! I feel as if I should cry every minute! Oh, oh! I don't know what — Oh, father, I hope you will not be such a thief! Do pray for me in time, that I may not be such a villain as he is.

Your affectionate daughter, J.

CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

In summing up the influence of Finney's life, it is of course difficult, and indeed impossible, to separate it from that of the general agencies with which he coöperated. Necessarily, his work was largely determined by the circumstances of the time in which he lived. It is often said that, if he had been born fifty years later, he would not have been so marked a man as he was. Whether this is true or not, it is not our province to determine. At any rate, it was no fault of his that he was born in the last of the eighteenth century, rather than in the middle of the nineteenth. His crowning virtue was, that he adjusted himself to surrounding conditions, and concentrated all his marvelous gifts upon the fields of work that from time to time were opened before him. His rare argumentative and oratorical powers were first called forth by the spiritual destitution of frontier communities, and among them he would have continued to labor but for a divine call to broader fields.

Like the great apostle to the Gentiles, Finney was truly "as one born out of due time," and until the day of his death he was urged forward in his varied lines of activity by an overwhelming

sense of his debt of gratitude to Christ. The whole effort of his subsequent life was to present to men, as best he could, the majesty and loveliness of God's character, and the absoluteness of the divine claim upon the affections and service of mankind. The severity which at times seemed to mark his preaching was as different as could be from rancor and ill-will. When he showed the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the wrath of God necessarily incurred by it, the auditor was left to judge for himself whether he was by his conduct personally incurring this wrath. In the course of his revival labors in any place, Finney was sure at some time to preach a sermon upon the necessity of confessing and forsaking sin. This almost always resulted in the unearthing of many buried crimes, the restitution of much ill-gotten gain, and the reuniting, through confession, of many broken friendships. But he ever had the true feeling, bred in his legal practice, of repugnance to bringing to light any matters which were not strictly of public concern.

The point with reference to which he felt that he had, above all others, a special mission in his later years was that of binding together in closer union the doctrine of faith and works. This appeared in his preaching long before he distinctly enunciated it in his writings on sanctification. Formally stated, his teaching was, that, while the love of God is the ground of justification, and the atonement of Christ one of the essential conditions

of it, we must insist also that present, full, and entire consecration of heart and life to God is an equally unalterable condition of pardon. According to his form of statement, the penitent soul remains justified no longer than this full-hearted consecration continues. "If he falls from his first love into the spirit of self-pleasing, he falls again into bondage to sin and to the law, is condemned, and must repent and do his 'first work,' must return to Christ, and renew his faith and love as a condition of his salvation."[1]

The death of Dr. Channing occurred in Boston in 1842, while Finney was engaged in his second revival effort in that city. It was reported to Finney that Dr. Channing desired to see him, but circumstances beyond control prevented the interview. Meanwhile, however, Channing had obtained from one of Finney's converts a copy of "Views of Sanctification" which Finney had just published, and expressed both great interest in it, and his inability to see anything in the doctrines there presented to which orthodox Christians could reasonably object. And, indeed, on going over the discussions of those early days, it is not difficult to believe that, had the relations between justification and sanctification been as clearly presented by the early New England theologians as they were afterwards by Finney, much of the occasion of separation between the Calvinists and the Arminians, as they were called, or, in the later development, the

[1] *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, p. 557.

Orthodox and the Unitarians, would have been obviated. Against Finney's statement of the doctrine of justification, Unitarians could certainly have had no ground of charging that it depreciated the importance of good works.

Finney's style of preaching has already been spoken of in some detail, but it will be useful to add here the description and estimate of it which was given in 1850 by Dr. John Campbell, editor of the "British Banner." Dr. Campbell was at that time pastor of the Tabernacle in Finsbury, London, and also of Tottenham Court Road Chapel, both of which had been built for Whitefield, and occupied by him for years. By invitation of Campbell, Finney preached in the Tabernacle for a period of nine months. At the end of the first three months, Dr. Campbell gives the following account of the character and result of these labors: —

"As many of our readers are anxious to know the progress of Mr. Finney in the metropolis, we shall give a few words of report. He continues, as heretofore, to preach five times a week, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, and latterly attending, also, and delivering an address, at the prayer meeting on the Monday evening, and then on Thursday evening meeting all inquirers. This is an amount of labor which, at this season of the year, it may be supposed that most men would sensibly feel, if not sink under; but with Mr. Finney it is otherwise. We have never heard him complain of

fatigue, and scarcely ever say the weather is hot! He seems, indeed, in his very element. This remarkable man would appear destined by Providence for this species of labor. He speaks with an ease altogether peculiar; to a large extent, his style is colloquial, interspersed, nevertheless, with lofty flights and impetuous bursts of a more oratorical character, when the delivery becomes intense, the voice acquires an ocean swell, accompanied by very energetic action. But these bursts are never long continued; he quickly returns to an easy level, and for many minutes together proceeds in a state of earnest repose, during which the address is colloquial, but still with a measure of inflection, always forcible and always solemn. It is a peculiar sort of style, altogether unlike that of any other preacher we ever heard; so much so, that simple people, whose taste has been formed upon the established model, have difficulty in considering it preaching at all. They scarcely know what to call it. It is speaking, they say, and they are not greatly out. It is speaking such as may be heard in Parliament, and to large extent in courts of law. It would correspond very well with first-class Westminster oratory, and would have fitted its possessor for eminence at the bar, to which he was originally destined. His voice is clear and remarkably strong; nevertheless admitting, although for that purpose rarely used, of the deepest pathos. The hearer is principally affected by a sense of power; no pity is ever felt for the speaker. The idea that

he must be fatigued, or that he will injure himself, never enters the mind, and it is somewhat strange that, while he never tires himself, it is the same with his hearers, — they never tire. Rarely, on Sabbath or week days, does he preach less than an hour and a half; and we remember no case of complaint, or any manifestation of weariness, even in London, of all places the least inclined to favor prolonged exercises of a religious character. To all appearance, they would sit till sunrise. Yet never a man had less of the meretricious or claptrap than Mr. Finney: the austerity of his manner, the severity of his address; the terrible force with which he comes down upon the ungodly, shutting up men in the prison-house of an awful accountability; and practical as his address to professors is, — yet it would seem somehow that the more he lashes the more he is loved. Never man had less of the soft and sentimental, the luscious in doctrine or spurious in experience, which has so frequently in London crowded houses with thoughtless, frivolous multitudes. This may be accounted for partly by his manner, perhaps very largely so, and also by his matter; for while in one respect he is mechanical, in others he is original, natural, and very varied. His mode of conducting services is peculiar to himself. In a pastoral light, his devotional exercises are exceedingly defective. Although he has now preached three months in this great house, the hearer would scarcely ever have discovered that there was either church or pastor,

or officer or schools, sickness or death, or any species of local labor requiring either prayer or sympathy: that there was a nation with its manifold wants, a senate, or a sovereign. Of a Queen or Parliament he has never been heard to make mention. So it is as to the world, the cause of missions, and so forth. The prayer grows out of the coming sermon; he speaks as if all flesh were before him: sin and death, redemption, and its application to the wants of the perishing portion of the multitude, — these things alone concern Mr. Finney; and from beginning to end, the petition is made to bear upon the conversion of his auditory. This is the case as a rule, to which there is scarcely an exception. His prayers, too, are interspersed with a dash of peculiarity, sometimes of eccentricity; but the effect is to fix attention on the part of the fallen multitude, although it rather grates occasionally upon the spiritual portion of his auditory. Then, as to his sermons, there is the same uniformity: he announces his text in the bluntest, simplest way possible, and without a word of prelude or preparation, intimates what he means to do, by dividing his text; then he dashes on from head to head till he has done, or rather till his time is up, for his thought never seems run out. Having finished that, he never fails to conclude with what he calls a few remarks, and these remarks are always peculiarly striking, pungent, and carefully drawn out of the subject. Then, in a moment, he stops short, prays, pronounces the benediction, and so the matter ends.

"The least informed portion of the people, and those that hear him only once or twice, may be strongly tempted, on certain occasions, to doubt whether he preaches the gospel, and whether he is altogether sound in the faith; but those that hear him, as we have heard him, for three months, will be at perfect ease upon that point, being fully satisfied of his perfect soundness in all respects, although he does not preach all points in every sermon, and does not always base his addresses on gospel considerations to the extent that is customary in England. There is one striking peculiarity which often exposes him to the charge of heresy, but which, we think, constitutes his remarkable, striking excellence: in speaking to the multitude, he always addresses them, not as unfortunate, but as criminal, ever pressing upon them the doctrine that nothing prevents them from repenting and believing but their pride and love of sin; and never calls on men to do other than repent and believe, — nothing to obtain faith and repentance. Under his preaching, no man could ever have been led to conclude that there was no sin in unbelief, none in impenitence. The result is, a remarkable cogency in his appeals. The atonement, the love of the Father, the abundance of mercy, — these points are exhibited in all their fullness, and men are summoned to an immediate surrender. But it could never be gathered by the sinner, from his addresses, that any power is necessary either to dispose or to enable him to receive the truth. Mr. Finney

addresses him as if no such help or power was either needed or provided; and in this we must contend that he pursues the true apostolic path, from which much preaching of modern times has grievously deviated. But when Mr. Finney comes to address Christians, and to speak of the operations of the Spirit, he pours himself forth in strains to which an apostle would have listened with approbation." [1]

At the farewell meeting six months later, Campbell made an address in which he more minutely analyzes Finney's characteristics: —

"Now, then," he said, "that Mr. Finney's course has reached its close, it may be permitted us to utter a thought or two relative to a man for whom we have conceived a very high regard, and in whose labors and history we feel the deepest interest. We cannot say that we are much gratified at the thought of Mr. Finney's returning to college duties, and the general ministry of a rural charge. We do not consider that such is the place for the man; and we must be allowed to think that, fifteen years ago, a mistake was committed when he became located in the midst of academic bowers. In our view, there are few living men to whom such an element is less suited. He is made for the millions — his place is the pulpit, rather than the professor's chair. He is a heaven-born sovereign of the people. The people he loves, and the mass

[1] Copied from the *British Banner* into the *Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. xii. p. 139.

of the people all but idolize him. He seems specially created for oral labor. The structure of his mind is altogether peculiar. The logical faculty is developed in an unusual degree, and hence there is a tendency to argument in excess. He reasons on and to the extreme of redundancy, often laboring to explain that which requires no further explanation, and needs no further proof. He is, moreover, strongly addicted to the metaphysical and analytical, and hence whatever he touches becomes more or less arrayed in a dialectical costume. These peculiarities might, at first sight, seem somewhat to unfit him for pulpit labor among the million; but it is otherwise: he succeeds either through or in spite of them. Whether he be understood or not, he is listened to, and complaints are not generally heard on the score of his being unintelligible. These rare gifts are of signal service in enabling Mr. Finney to fathom the deepest recesses of the human heart, and to throw light on the darkest portions of human character. For moral anatomy, he has no equal among the multitude of great and successful ministers whom it has been our lot to hear. An assembly often quivers under him as does the living subject under the knife of the operator, whom experience has rendered skillful and habit made callous. Multitudes have stood amazed at themselves as presented in the mirror he exhibits to their astonished view. This peculiar power alone would have rendered Mr. Finney remarkable among public instructors;

but this is only one feature of his complex and multifarious character as preacher. His declamatory are fully equal to his logical powers. In this walk we think he has no superior. He thunders and lightens when his subject requires it, in a manner to shake the heart of an assembly, rousing the most apathetic, and awing the most careless.

"But even this is not all; he possesses another quality seldom found in combination with the foregoing: he is occasionally, though seldom, strongly pathetic; the voice falters, and the eyes become suffused with tears. Thus, then, Mr. Finney largely combines to himself the qualities necessary to constitute the three great classes of public speaking, and is capable, with proper application, of the highest success in them all; but we believe it is only justice to his great character to say that he never thought five minutes on the subject. Whatever he is, he is from nature and the gifts of God; art has done nothing for him. The result of the whole is an extraordinary range of mental and moral contact with the assembly. There is something for men of every class; all, in turns, are gratified, and all are occasionally disappointed, according as, throughout the discourse, the one quality or the other may predominate. Sometimes, during an entire sermon, he is dry and logical in the extreme, addressing himself to pure intellect, making no provision whatever for either heart or fancy. At other times both are regaled in a very high degree, as an interdict is then placed on the logical

faculty; and there have been a few discourses, also, touching and pathetic throughout. In these respects he is the most varied of preachers, and in all respects the most unequal. . . .

"It is certainly a pity that a man so singularly endowed for evangelistic labor should be chained down by the dull routine of college duties. If we mistake not, there are a thousand men to be found in the United States that would perform Mr. Finney's professorial duties as well, perhaps in many respects better, than he; but we doubt if, amongst the three and twenty million American citizens, and the forty thousand ministers, more or less, that labor among them, there are many, if one, that possess all the qualifications above enumerated. Thus much for the attributes of Mr. Finney as a public instructor; and the opinion is given after hearing him incessantly for about nine months.

"It was my wish for many years that Mr. Finney should visit the shores of England. His works had come before him; and when his 'Lectures on Revivals' appeared, I read them with avidity, and, as a portion of you will remember, for three months, from week to week, at special meetings, I read and expounded them in this edifice. Their value was not in my estimation at all lessened by their peculiarities, and by what might be called, not without truth, their occasional extravagance both of thought and of language. These I considered, and still consider, but as the dust in the balance, — as spots in the sun. The volume, as a

whole, I have ever viewed as of extraordinary importance. The more I pondered, the more I perceived its inherent excellence. The book excited a very strong desire in me to see the man, and still more to hear him. The man I have seen, the man I have heard; and in both, the expectations excited by the book have been more than realized. But I have not only seen and heard him: after the manner of the ancients, we have eaten salt together. You all know the adage, 'If you will know a man, you must live with him.' Mr. Finney and I have lived together for the space of some nine months, — a period which, I suppose, will be admitted sufficient for the purpose in question. I think I may therefore say I have a tolerable knowledge of him, and that it is but simple justice to say that to increase knowledge has been only to increase regard. Throughout that long period we have seen in him much to love and much to admire. I shall never cease to prize his friendship, and to think of him with unalloyed satisfaction and high pleasure. His virtues partake not a little of the old Roman, while his manners are strongly republican. In everything good, the reality exceeds the appearance, and, as the observation becomes closer, the esteem ascends."[1]

During this period of Finney's labor in London, Henry Ward Beecher was in England on a visit, and was sending letters regularly to the "New York Independent," one of which is devoted en-

[1] *The Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. xiii. pp. 81, 83.

tirely to Finney's work. Having referred to the alarm which some American papers were endeavoring to raise in England concerning Finney, — one of them declaring "that the churches in America in which Mr. F. had labored have *since wept tears of blood in consequence*," — Beecher comments as follows upon what he saw and heard: —

"On two occasions we were present, when, at the close of the Sabbath evening's service, more than a thousand persons presented themselves in an adjoining hall as inquirers. Nor have we ever witnessed in any place more solemnity, order, and unexceptionable propriety in the conduct of meetings, than has prevailed under Mr. Finney at the Tabernacle. And now, if we were an English clergyman, and if we were inclined to doubt the reality of revivals, and, seeing the results of Mr. Finney's labors, should hear it testified from the land of revivals that they were spurious, — that, good as they might now seem, they would end in mischief, — we should conclude, not against Mr. Finney, but against revivals. We should say, if these are spurious, all revivals are spurious. This is the tendency of the efforts put forth by religious newspapers in America to undermine Mr. Finney in England. For the sake of pushing at a theological antagonist, they are deepening the impression, already too deep, that revivals of religion are disorders, — the channels of mischief and not of blessings. . . .

"Our English brethren ought to understand

that the opinions expressed by several religious newspapers on this side are not the opinions of the American church; that there is a large proportion of American Christians differing from Mr. Finney in his views of Christian perfection, and not ignorant of some evils in his early revival labors, who, notwithstanding, regard his life to have been an era in the revival history of America, and his labors, upon the whole, to have been a precious blessing to the cause of God in America. Another generation will sift the chaff from the wheat, and then, we firmly believe, few men will be found to have been better husbandmen than Charles G. Finney. May God long spare his life and increase his usefulness!"[1]

Apropos to these references to the early revivals in central New York is the testimony of the late Rev. James B. Shaw, of Rochester, for forty-seven years pastor of the Brick Church of that city, who listened to Finney's preaching in Auburn in 1827, and in subsequent years was repeatedly assisted by Finney. According to Dr. Shaw, the earlier as well as the later preaching of Finney was characterized by great propriety of manner; and when anything occurred which seemed otherwise, it was amply justified by the attendant circumstances as interpreted under the inspiration of the moment.

In the "History of the Rochester Presbytery,"

[1] Reprinted from *The Independent : Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. xii. p. 199.

published in 1889, the following commendatory reference is made to Finney's work in the same region: —

"The powerful revivals wrought of God through the labors of Rev. Charles G. Finney, in the years 1830, 1842, and 1856, in the city of Rochester, still retain their impress upon the churches in this section, and are often referred to, by those who were then converted, as characterized by very strong conviction of sin, followed by very positive evidence of change of heart." It is suggestive, also, that they can add, "the absence of strife [throughout the Presbytery] is worthy of special mention. . . . The peace of the churches has been attested by the almost entire absence of judicial business."

To these contemporary estimates of the character and influence of Finney's preaching, we may add the tribute of Dr. Joseph P. Thompson in an historical discourse given upon the last Sabbath of his own occupancy of the Broadway Tabernacle, New York, in April, 1857. After having referred to Finney's labors in that church, he adds: —

"Mr. Finney's method of preaching was peculiar. Gifted with fine powers of analysis, which were early disciplined in the study of the law, he has, also, the constructive faculty in a high degree; so that he can at once dissect an error or sophism, analyze a complex feeling, motive, or action, and build a logical argument with cumulative force. With these he combines a vivid imagination, and

the power of graphic description. Nor, with the seeming sharpness and severity of his logic and the terrors which his fancy portrays, is he wanting in tenderness of feeling. His experimental knowledge of divine truth is deep and thorough, and his knowledge of the workings of the human mind under that truth is extended and philosophical. Hence his preaching searches the conscience, convinces the judgment, and stirs the will either to assent or to rebellion. His elocution, though unstudied and so sometimes inelegant, is yet strangely effective; and in the proper mood of an assembly, a pause, a gesture, an emphasis, an inflection, an exclamation, will produce the highest oratorical effects. The conviction of sincerity attends his words; the force of an earnest mind goes with his logic.

"His sermons in the Tabernacle were unwritten, and were usually preached from a brief lying before him. But though extempore in their dress, they were not unstudied as to their matter or their form. In yonder study, the first pastor of the Tabernacle had a huge slate, upon which he would sketch an outline of a sermon, as an architect sketches his plan, the painter his groups. This done, he would betake himself to prayer, or pace the room in earnest thought. By and by, perhaps the whole plan would be effaced, and another substituted for it; or the first would be recast in the vigorous mould of a mind kindled by prayer, till it came forth glowing with the fire of the Holy

Ghost. Then he was ready for the pulpit, and therefore God was with him in the pulpit." [1]

The extent to which opposition to Finney at length subsided, and the degree to which the real merits of his work were finally appreciated, appeared pre-eminently at the great meeting in Oberlin in November, 1871, to organize the National Triennial Congregational Council. This meeting was composed of the chief representative men of the denomination from all parts of the country, and was presided over by Rev. Dr. Budington, of Brooklyn, New York. Toward the close of their deliberations Finney was able, though in his eightieth year, to address the council for an hour upon the "Endowment of the Holy Ghost." The scene has already been alluded to, and was one long to be remembered by those who witnessed it. The day after this address, when the council laid the corner-stone of the building which was to be the future home of the theological seminary, Dr. Budington closed the meeting with some brief remarks. After referring to the fact that, on the day before, they had all listened to President Finney with bated breath and swelling hearts, he added the following significant words: —

"I rejoice to stand this day upon the grave of buried prejudice. It is true that Oberlin has been a battle-cry in our ranks for a generation. It is so no longer, but a name of peace, of inspiration, and

[1] On the authority of Deacon Samuel Pitts. See *The Last Sabbath in the Broadway Tabernacle*, New York, 1857, pp. 14–17.

hope. What does the history of Oberlin prove but just this, — to hold sacred the individual conscience, and inviolable the liberty of the individual church? If days of darkness come, of suspicion and alienation, as sure as God's truth is great and the love of Christ pervasive, the light will return and come again with a brighter and sweeter effulgence." [1]

It is impossible to determine the number of conversions directly traceable to Finney's labors. But without doubt it runs far up into the tens of thousands; and as the converts were largely men and women in mature life, the influences directly proceeding from them at once became predominant in a large number of important religious centres.

As already shown, the widespread and growing usefulness of Oberlin is preëminently due to Finney's direct influence upon the community, and upon the successive generations of students who gathered there through the forty years of his connection with the institution. During this period, there were 294 graduates from the Theological Department, 626 young men and 657 young women from the Classical and Literary Departments; in all, 1,577. But in addition to this, throughout this entire period there was upon the ground a great body of transient students of unusual maturity of mind who were as thoroughly influenced by him as were those who took the full course. In all, there were about twenty thousand

[1] *Oberlin News*, August 20, 1874.

who thus felt the magnetism of Finney's presence at Oberlin.

Finney himself fully appreciated the greatness of this opportunity. In a letter to Lewis Tappan, in 1865, he points with satisfaction to the result of the movement initiated by Arthur Tappan in giving an anti-slavery character to the school at Oberlin, and remarks that no history of the anti-slavery movement can be satisfactory which does not recognize the large share which Oberlin had in directing it and giving it success, and that in the anti-slavery struggle it was Oberlin that turned the scale in the Northwest, and thus at the critical moment saved it to the Union.[1] The character of the Oberlin influence and the methods by which it was obtained have been well delineated by Gen. J. Dolson Cox: —

"The theological classes spent their vacations in preaching or anti-slavery lecturing, and, whether preaching or lecturing, the absorbing topic of the time was rarely absent from their thoughts or speech. The undergraduate classes in college were

[1] "At the breaking out of the Rebellion, the influences so long predominant at Oberlin had their full effect. One hundred of the one hundred and sixty-six young men in the college classes enlisted. Besides these, ninety-seven of the alumni are known to have done so, and about five hundred others who had been students. Among these, two rose to be major-generals, one brigadier-general, and two colonels. The first officers for the colored troops were largely drawn from Oberlin students. One hundred of those who enlisted lost their lives on the battle-field and in hospital." — Address by Prof. John M. Ellis on "Oberlin and the American Conflict," August 23, 1865.

also men of more maturity than the average of such students in other colleges. They were nearly all poor, and many of them quite dependent upon their own exertion for support, and this class of students had to wait for advanced education till they could save the means to pay for it, or reach an age when they could make teaching in the common schools furnish the wherewithal to keep the wolf from the door in their alternate terms of study. The college terms were arranged to suit such students, who were a large majority of the whole, and the long vacation was placed in the winter for this reason. From the preparatory classes upward, and in both the collegiate and ladies' departments, all of the hundreds of earnest young people who thronged here were already active workers in life. Each of them had his scores of younger minds upon whom for some months in the year he was impressing his own zeal for knowledge not only, but his own intense earnestness in the great public questions of reform. Every debating society formed in a country hamlet was a platform from which the politics of the country took shape, and where the men were formed and instructed who became delegates to nominating conventions, and created the public sentiment which soon began to find its echo in Congress. It mattered little whether a representative was a Whig or a Democrat, it soon became apparent that there were a considerable number of the districts in the Northwest where no man's re-election was safe if he defied or disappointed the

rapidly growing anti-slavery sentiment of his constituents. It would be hard to overestimate the part in this work which was taken by Oberlin students. Remember that they were numbered by hundreds at an early day, and soon exceeded a thousand. Each autumn they swarmed from the college halls, and were not only to be found in the white schoolhouses dotted thick over northern Ohio, but they scattered westward and eastward, and even southward, and a beneficent swarm they were, always appreciated as successful and earnest teachers, sometimes also hated and cursed as the supposed emissaries of a radical propaganda, but, whether loved or hated, always pushing, debating, inquiring, and agitating. This was not altogether because they meant to agitate, or fully understood the sort of influence they were exerting. It was better than that. They were young, intelligent men and women who were inspired by new views of life and human progress, and with the *naïveté* of children they talked about what interested them. It bubbled from their lips as naturally as their breath, and they could not refrain from it. They saw with prophetic instinct the good time coming, and preached it most effectively by the constant exhibition of their faith in its advent. The number of students who took degrees in the ordinary college course was not large compared with other schools. By far the greater number came for a year or two, to supplement their common-school education and prepare for common-

school teaching, from which they went back to the farm and shop, and to all the common avocations of life. The school-mistresses became the wives of the most intelligent and active men in the little, growing communities of the West, and often did more than their husbands to mould the opinions of their neighbors through the subtle influence of earnest conscientiousness and intelligence, exerted quietly but persistently from day to day and from year to year. . . .

"Their numbers [that is, of Oberlin students] have been so great that, throughout the West and Northwest it would be hard to find a community which did not acknowledge their influence. The great tide of immigration from all the Eastern and Middle States runs by the very doors of Oberlin, and her students, among the most active and enterprising of those that committed themselves to the current, have explored every byway and highway of all the new routes that advancing civilization opened. Nay, they were often the foremost among the pioneers who preceded all civilization. They were missionaries among the Ojibways while Iowa and Minnesota were yet a wilderness. They were with John Brown at Lawrence and Osawatomie when the outposts of freedom were first established.

"What can be clearer than that, in this chapter of our country's history, the influence of Oberlin as a college was a factor of great and permanent importance? It would be rash to assign to any one

influence a decisive and preëminent power, for all the circumstances of the time, and the march of intellect and progress in the whole race, combined to remove from the earth an institution that belonged to the dark ages; but I unhesitatingly assert that there is hardly a township west of the Alleghanies and north of the central line of Ohio in which the influence of Oberlin men and Oberlin opinions cannot be specifically identified and traced. It was the propaganda of a school of thought and action having distinct characteristics, and as easily recognizable in its work as was that of Garrison and the American Anti-slavery Society in their methods and work." [1]

As we have seen, Finney early learned the value of the press as an adjunct to the pulpit and to the teacher's desk, and through this agency his influence has gained a permanent place in the world. His sermons, though imperfectly reported, and his theological treatises are still read by great numbers of the most earnest, intelligent, and thoughtful people in the world, and will be well worth reading as long as religion and theology are topics of human interest. The peculiar value of these writings arises from the fact that they proceeded, not from a recluse, but from a born philosopher whose brain was constantly taxed with the great practical problem of converting the world.

While acting as pastor in New York, several of Finney's sermons were issued in tract form and

[1] *The Oberlin Jubilee*, pp. 285–289.

widely distributed. But his thoughts came prominently before the public first in his "Revival Lectures," which were reported by Dr. Leavitt for the "New York Evangelist" in the fall and winter of 1834. As already noted, these at once gave a large circulation to the paper, and thirteen editions were rapidly sold in this country in book form, and there has been a continuous and large demand for the volume up to the present time. In England the sales were still more phenomenal. Two rival houses published the book, one of which reported previous to 1850 that it had sold eighty thousand copies. It was translated into Welsh, and was largely instrumental in promoting extensive revivals in the churches using that tongue. The Morrisonians of Scotland were likewise incited to successful revival efforts by the advent of the volume. Dr. Campbell, the successor of Whitefield in London, was so attracted by the lectures when they were first issued that, as already related, he read and commented upon them to his people in course. They were also translated into French, and, according to Finney's impression, into German. Of this, however, there does not seem to be sufficient evidence, though the following incident related by Professor Park is indicative of the character of the influence of the book in that country. "About the year 1843," he writes, "I made repeated visits to a friend in Berlin who resided in the palace of the King of Prussia. My friend was a scholar of rare learning and of warm piety.

He was an instructor of the heir of the Prussian throne. I saw in his library a copy of Finney's 'Lectures on Revivals of Religion.' My friend spoke of the lectures in terms of high praise. The query came at once to my mind, Who can tell that Charles G. Finney may not exert on the future king an influence which may be felt throughout the Prussian kingdom? About forty-five years after these visits, the heir to the throne became not only the King of Prussia, but the Emperor [Fredrick] of Germany."

Through the columns of the "Oberlin Evangelist," also, Finney's sermons, lectures, and letters for a period of twenty years (1839 to 1859) reached many thousands of most influential Christian people living in all parts of the country. The volumes entitled "Sermons on Important Subjects," "Lectures to Professing Christians," and "Gospel Themes," did not have so wide a circle of readers as the "Revival Lectures," but they have all passed through repeated editions, and are still in active demand. The first American edition of his "Systematic Theology," and a subsequent edition in England in 1851, were rapidly sold, and the somewhat condensed reprint edited by President Fairchild has, at the present time, a steady sale.

From the beginning, the authorities of Oberlin set themselves in opposition to secret societies, and none have ever been permitted among the students. In his early life Finney himself was a member of a Masonic lodge, but soon after his

conversion he quietly withdrew, and was granted an honorable dismission, dated May 7, 1824. For some years he did not feel called upon to make any revelations prejudicial to the order, but when, by the murder of Morgan in 1829, attention was directed to the character of Masonic oaths, Finney no longer felt any scruples in letting the public know that Morgan's revelations of Masonry were correct, at least so far as Finney himself had gone in its degrees. But he was not prominently known as an opponent of the system until 1869, when circumstances connected with the First Church in Oberlin thrust the subject upon him; and with his accustomed energy and decision he both preached and wrote upon it until it received full treatment at his hands. Finney's sermons and articles resulting from this discussion were soon afterwards collected, arranged, revised, and published in a volume of about 300 pages, by the Western Tract and Book Society, and it has since constituted one of the standard works of anti-Masonic literature.

Shortly after his death the "Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney, written by Himself," were published. These contain personal reminiscences of his revival labors, and are a most important source of information concerning his whole life and work. The book is written in his usual perspicuous style, and is full of important reflections upon the character of Christianity, and upon the means of promoting its interests. It breathes a most kindly spirit, and reveals in striking light the

secret springs of Finney's untiring activity. Many thousand copies have been sold, and it is highly valued by Christians of all denominations. The copyright was bequeathed to the trustees of Oberlin College on condition that they would not have the book sold by subscription.

Thus, fortunately, Finney has left in literature a permanent record not only of his life, but also of his struggles to adjust the truths of Christianity into such a harmonious system of thought that no violence should be done to the dictates of reason. This, as he often said, was (after that of the actual conversion of souls) the great aim of his life. In attempting the work, he had the important advantage of viewing everything from his own deep spiritual experience, and from wide practical contact with the world. Added to this was the strong philosophical character and analytical bent of his mind. The tribute which Prof. Charles Hodge, in his review of the volumes on "Systematic Theology," paid to Finney's intellect, is striking, and to a good degree just, though the evident purpose of the praise was to establish a solid ground from which to demonstrate the absurdity of the positions maintained by the New School Calvinists of his time. By exalting the logical consistency of Finney, Hodge skillfully aimed to commit the unwilling New School men to Finney's conclusions, and so to lead them to disavow his premises and give up their whole system. This aim, however, did not prevent the Princeton professor from

speaking the truth when he said, "It [the book] is to a degree very unusual, an original work. . . . It is as hard to read as Euclid. Nothing can be omitted, nothing passed over lightly. The author begins with certain postulates, or what he calls first truths of reason, and these he traces out, with singular clearness and strength, to their legitimate conclusions. We do not see that there is a break or a defective link in the whole chain. . . . If you grant his principles, you have already granted his conclusions."

In constructing his theological system, Finney necessarily approached the Bible with a certain amount of presupposition respecting the nature of the subject under consideration; and in his view, as in that of Augustine, the Bible is a religious revelation to the common people which does not to any great degree lose its perspicuity in a translation. Its main line of thought is so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. As a practical revelation pointing out the highway of holiness, it is not a substitute for common sense, but a supplement to it. Like Augustine of old, therefore, he never felt greatly embarrassed by his ignorance of Greek and Hebrew.

Briefly stated, the most characteristic points of Finney's system of theology are these: —

1. The human will is self-determining in its action;

2. Obligation is limited by ability;

3. All virtuous choice terminates upon the good

of beings, and, in the ultimate analysis, on the *good of being* in general;

4. The will is never divided in its action, but, with whatever momentum it has at each instant, it is either wholly virtuous or wholly sinful;

5. The total depravity of the human race is a biblical doctrine, and since the fall in Eden all the acts of men previous to regeneration are sinful;

6. Regeneration and conversion are synonymous terms, descriptive of an act in which the Holy Spirit and the human will coöperate. Truth, however, is in all cases the instrument through which conversion is secured by the Spirit;

7. The condition into which men are brought by regeneration is either that of continued holiness, increasing in volume; or of states alternating from entire holiness to entire sinfulness, — the former state predominating at last. The final perseverance of all who are once truly converted is a revealed truth which the reason cannot contradict;

8. The doctrine of election is our only assurance that the salvation of any will be secured. There is a divine *plan* of salvation whose means and ends were chosen from eternity, and which is now unfolding before us;

9. In this plan Christ is the central figure; a being who is both God and man, and whose humiliation and sufferings are a governmental substitute for the punishment of those who are sanctified through faith. The atonement satisfies the

demands of general justice, and its provisions are freely offered to all men.

Such, in brief, is the system. With two or three exceptions, the statements as here given are accepted by New School Calvinists. The controverted points have reference to the ground of obligation, the simplicity of moral action, and the process of sanctification.

So far, however, as relates to the nature of holiness, Finney's system is the first cousin, if not the grandchild, of that of President Edwards; and the student who accepts the system will find himself very well satisfied with Dr. Samuel Hopkins's development of the Edwardean theory of virtue in his "Inquiry into the Nature of True Holiness."

To avoid the charge sometimes made against this theory, that it substitutes abstract for concrete objects of love, or, as Dr. Hodge states it, puts "the universe in the place of God, as that to which our allegiance is due," Finney was very particular to use a formula in which God was expressly recognized. In designating the objects of love, he was scrupulously careful to say, "God and the universe," and he everywhere emphasized, as much as Edwards did, the thought that "all other beings, even the whole universe, are as nothing in comparison with the Divine Being."

Careful analysis and prolonged study will show that the view of benevolence which Finney defended with such skill, and preached with such power, is adapted in an unparalleled degree for

maintaining just views of both the goodness and the severity of God. By regarding "benevolence," or "good-willing," as the generic virtue under which all minor virtues range themselves as species, the theologian and philosopher is raised to a point of view from which the reason, if it cannot indeed and of itself *prove* the evangelical doctrines of Christianity, at any rate can most easily *approve* them.

De Quincey has well remarked that Christianity is the only religious system that provides any place for preaching, in the true sense of that word. Dr. Albert Barnes narrows the field to still closer limits, and shows that all great preachers have gone for their most effective weapons to the armory in possession of the New School Calvinists of his day. Finney's system preserves all the advantages of Arminianism in the pulpit, and all the strength of Calvinism in the closet, and so has been one of the most efficient means looking to that doctrinal agreement now so rapidly approaching between the great religious denominations of this country.

Probably Finney has succeeded better than any other author in elaborating a system of theology which combines and harmonizes the truths of these contending parties. He has done this in part, in a negative way, by not philosophizing overmuch. For, as he maintained, it is not the New School Calvinists who deform the evangelical system by their excess of philosophy, but, rather, it is the Old School Calvinists who distort the system by bur-

dening it with their inflexible theories of an "imputed guilt which is not actual guilt," and with a theory of obligation which is dissevered from ability. It was, he contended, the Old School theologians who were entering too deeply into the philosophy of regeneration, and attempting to prove a universal negative by asserting that regeneration is an act of the Spirit which is not moral and persuasive. It was they who undertook such impossibilities as trying to prove that in regeneration the Spirit produces a change "in the immanent disposition, principles, tastes, or habits which underlie all conscious exercises."

Finney's theory of virtue, especially his statement of the simplicity of moral action, is sometimes set down as rationalism, and his doctrine of sanctification as mysticism. But his theory that each act of the will is either wholly right or wholly wrong gives him this advantage, that he can interpret in an absolute manner, and regard as reasonable, the command to "love God with all our heart," while at the same time the ground of hope that we shall attain actual stability and constancy in holy exercises of the heart is left open for discussion on independent principles. The doctrine of sanctification is no more mystical than is the doctrine of the perseverance of saints. The questions concerning the assurance we may have of a state of entire (*i. e.* continuous) sanctification in this life, and, if attainable, concerning the methods by which it may be obtained, fall into the same

category with those having reference to the perseverance of saints and their security in the heavenly state. His exhortation with regard to sanctification is really nothing more than this: Give perfect obedience *now* to the will of God; fill your minds to their utmost capacity with the persuasive knowledge of Christ; open your hearts in the fullest manner to the *present* work of the Holy Spirit, — and you may then rationally hope to be kept for the future; but your duty is always with the present. Finney did not encourage expectation of a definite experience of sanctification like that taking place in conversion.

The pages which Finney devoted in his "Systematic Theology" to the offices of Christ in securing our sanctification will always be classic, and, wherever they are known, will be valued most highly by the most devout members of the Christian church. No one could be more anxious than he to exalt Christ and his work. If it is rationalism to use words in such a manner that they are self-consistent, and to propound a philosophy which neither does violence to the reason nor robs Christ of his glory, the charge of being a rationalist ought not to be considered objectionable. But it is essential to emphasize, as Finney's system does, the preëminence of Christ, for there is no magical power in the formulas of his system either to determine practical duty for us or to determine us to duty. The "good of being," considered as a general conception which we are to choose, is so dif-

fused, so vast, and so far off, that the choice of it does not of itself aid us much in threading our way through the perplexities of practical life. The navigator needs a chart of the ocean as well as a look at the North star to guide his course through the shoals and into the harbor. After Finney's pupil has accepted the highest well-being of God and the universe as his ethical polar star, he will still have to fall back on all the old-time helps of laws, customs, traditions, tendencies of mind, and revelation, in order to determine what things to do in service of that end, and what things to leave undone.

In no sense does Finney regard the Edwardean theory of virtue as a substitute for the gospel. It is only an unfolding of the words of Christ when he said that all the law and the prophets hung on the two commandments bidding us to love God with all the heart, and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Under this divinely enunciated law, the gospel ranges itself as the clearest of all revelations of subordinate duties, and the most persuasive of all incentives to virtuous action, while at the same time it presents the most perfect vindication of God's claim to the possession of both love and holiness, even when exercising the apparently antagonistic qualities of justice and mercy.

Finney's system is invaluable in the following respects: it leaves no excuse for sin; it emphasizes present responsibility; it exalts the atonement of Christ; and it magnifies the work of the Holy

Spirit. It must be judged as a whole. Of the many advantages of its comprehensive theory of virtue, not the least is, that it affords a ready solution to the increasingly difficult problems which scientific discussions are forcing upon the Christian public with reference to the doctrine of final causes. In the light of scientific progress, it is becoming more and more hazardous to attempt to say for what ultimate ends particular contrivances in nature were designed. Indeed, the scheme of nature has so grown upon the vision of modern scientific inquirers that they can no longer find any unity in final causes which is not as far off and made up of as many particulars as the last end in Finney's theory of virtuous choice, viz., the "highest good of being."

With God, to choose is to perform. He chooses this highest good of being as the rule of his action, and everything in heaven and on earth and under the earth is designed for the promotion of it. Man with his limited powers cannot fathom this wisdom, but must rest content with such provisional interpretation as may serve his immediate necessities. For practical knowledge of God's subordinate designs, man has to pray for a daily supply of wisdom, and to go forth every day in the week to gather the manna which God sends down from heaven.

But the ultimate and real end for which anything is created is the sum of all the uses to which it is ever put. This principle, which in its sphere

is coincident with Finney's definition of virtue, is destined to play an increasingly important part in our attempt to adjust natural theology to scientific theories of nature. Only as one learns to state correctly the true theory of virtue can he state correctly the doctrine of design in nature.

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